



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 14 MAR 2022

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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 More troops deploy overseas</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-europe-savannah-georgia-2e1f24e5d031e71557093088a6e8bf86">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-europe-savannah-georgia-2e1f24e5d031e71557093088a6e8bf86</a>
GIST	<p>SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — U.S. soldiers continued to deploy Friday to Europe, joining thousands already sent overseas to support NATO allies amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>About 130 soldiers from the 87th Division Sustainment Support Battalion, 3rd Division Sustainment Brigade, lined up with rucksacks inside a terminal at Hunter Airfield in Savannah before marching outside and boarding their chartered flight. It departed amid grey skies and rain.</p> <p>Republican U.S. Rep. Earl "Buddy" Carter, of Pooler, Georgia, was among those in attendance. He was seen "fist-bumping" many of the soldiers as they boarded the plane.</p> <p>The battalion's soldiers are in addition to the estimated 3,800 soldiers from the Army's 3rd Infantry Division who have deployed in recent weeks from nearby Fort Stewart, said Lt. Col. Lindsey Elder, the division's spokesperson.</p> <p>Spec. Danton Belucio, who has served in the Army for three years, said he looked forward to going on his first deployment.</p> <p>"I've always wanted to actually go on one to do something different," he said. "It makes me feel like I'm helping somebody."</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Charles Costanza, the 3rd Infantry's commander, said recently that soldiers are being told to prepare for six months overseas, though deployments could be lengthened or shortened per developments in Ukraine.</p> <p>The Pentagon has ordered roughly 12,000 total service members from various U.S. bases to Europe, with a couple of thousand more already stationed abroad shifting to other European countries.</p> <p>The soldiers' mission is to train alongside military units of NATO allies in a display of force aimed at deterring further aggression by Russia. The Pentagon has stressed U.S. forces are not being deployed to fight in Ukraine.</p> <p>Belucio, 24, of Orlando, Florida, said he was not worried at all about participating in the mission.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Census: Blacks leave cities for suburbs</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/census-black-population-grows-in-suburbs-shrinks-in-cities-b3e7b1988f81d01c9b25673a112dcdaf">https://apnews.com/article/census-black-population-grows-in-suburbs-shrinks-in-cities-b3e7b1988f81d01c9b25673a112dcdaf</a>
GIST	<p>CHICAGO (AP) — A longtime area staple with its wagon wheel décor and “Roy Rogers ribeye,” The Ranch Steak House is fighting to reopen as one of the last sit-down restaurants in the once-flourishing Black Chicago neighborhood of Roseland.</p> <p>About 13 miles (21 kilometers) away near Indiana, Christopher Cain and wife Deja Cousins-Cain sought a new market for their wine bar that promises “Good Vibes Only,” settling on the suburb of Lansing, where growth has included a steady increase in Black residents.</p> <p>The two enclaves of roughly 30,000 people reflect how Black migration patterns in the 21st century are changing the makeup of metropolitan areas nationwide. For decades, Black residents have been leaving some of the nation’s largest cities while suburbs have seen an increase in their Black populations. Those two trends have now spread to even more areas of the country, according to the 2020 U.S. census.</p> <p>The patterns echo the “white flight” that upended urban landscapes in the 20th century. Like those who left cities before them, Black residents often move because of worries about crime and a desire for reputable schools, affordable housing and amenities. But there are key differences: Leaving Black city neighborhoods that are starved for investment is often more of a necessity than a choice, and those who do settle into new suburban lives often find racial inequities there, too.</p> <p>From 1990 to 2000, 13 of the United States’ biggest cities lost Black residents. By 2020, it was 23. According to the census, roughly 54% of Black residents within the 100 biggest American metro areas were suburbanites in 2020, up from 43% two decades ago, according to Bill Frey of the Brookings Institution.</p> <p>While New York, Los Angeles and Philadelphia all lost Black residents from 2010 to 2020, the change was especially notable in Chicago, which gained population but lost 85,000 Black people, the highest number after Detroit, according to the 2020 census. Those numbers could vary slightly, as the Census Bureau reported last week that 3.3% of the Black population was undercounted in the 2020 census, a rate higher than in 2010.</p> <p>The official count found that a section of Roseland measuring less than 1 square mile lost 1,600 Black residents. Now, the area near where former President Barack Obama was a community organizer — located about 20 minutes south of downtown — doesn’t even have a grocery store. That makes Judy Ware, who bought the Ranch restaurant in 2018, more determined to hang on.</p> <p>“We take pride in trying to keep this institution in the neighborhood,” she said. “It’s needed.” For others, though, the suburbs offer a fresh choice.</p> <p>Cousins-Cain and her husband surprised themselves in choosing Lansing, which wasn’t always friendly to Black people.</p> <p>Settled by Dutch and German immigrants, the city has seen a roughly 50% increase in its Black residents, who now represent almost half the population. Lansing recently elected its first Black trustee.</p> <p>“It just feels like we are finally getting an opportunity to bring something to the table and bring something to the conversation,” Cousins-Cain said.</p> <p>—</p> <p>The trends are nuanced. Part of the explanation is that Black residents are continuing to move to Southern cities in a reversal of the Great Migration, a movement that began in the 1910s and resulted in millions leaving the South for northern cities to escape discrimination. But more recently, some of the starkest changes are happening within metro areas as suburbs of major cities see Black population growth.</p>

Black residents, who represented roughly 40% of Chicago's population in 1980, now make up less than 30%. Their presence increased, meanwhile, in dozens of Chicago suburbs from 2010 to 2020.

Chicago residents and demographers offer no shortage of reasons for the urban exodus:

— The decline of the steel industry and blue-collar jobs starting in the 1970s. — The war on drugs. — The dismantling of public housing in the 2000s that displaced thousands of Black residents. — School closures in 2014 that disproportionately affected Black and Latino children.

"It's really hard to point to one specific thing," said Dan Cooper, director of research with Chicago's Metropolitan Planning Council. "And when you look at the confluence of factors, Black folks haven't been centered in policy or they are centered in wrong ways."

Chicago, long a segregated city, continues to report disparate outcomes by race when it comes to home ownership, income, transportation access and more. In Roseland, residents note persistent crime, delayed city services and a train line that ends at Roseland's northern edge. Worries persist about population loss diluting Black political power as drafts of a political remapping show fewer majority-Black wards.

Many said those issues forced them to leave.

Truck driver Chris Calhoun, 32, sought more peace in suburban South Holland in 2014.

The deciding factor for him, he said, was, "Where can I live where my kids can go outside and ride their bikes, or we can take a walk around the block as a family without looking over my shoulder?"

Crystal Fenn left in 2015 for law school in suburban Atlanta, where she's now an attorney.

"If you could do anything better for yourself, why would you want to be there?" she said. "The lack of economic dollars, it's almost like the city doesn't care about Roseland anymore."

Once a Dutch enclave, Roseland was annexed into Chicago in 1892. Within decades, there was an influx of Black families.

Marc Pullins, 56, recalls four nearby grocery stores and has fond memories of Kohn Elementary School.

"Half the neighborhood went to that school," said Pullins, a current resident and activist. "They're all gone."

Kohn is located within the section of Roseland that lost more than 1,600 Black residents. The school sits vacant, a green "For Sale" sign out front. It is among the roughly 55 schools targeted by former Mayor Rahm Emanuel in the nation's largest mass school closure.

Nearby homes and businesses, including a candy shop, are shuttered. The vacancies extend down a once-thriving business corridor that Preservation Chicago has deemed among Chicago's "most endangered places."

Kisha Pleasant, 41, bought her first home in Roseland, but violence and dwindling amenities pushed her out.

"I can't retire in this area," she said. "I want to come outside, and I don't want to be scared that somebody will be shooting at me."

Last year, she moved to Lansing.

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Sameerah and Jerrell Miller moved with their daughter to a leafy Lansing street six years ago after living in Chicago and neighboring Oak Park.

They bought a home near a top school for less than what they would have paid in Chicago. Lansing's median home price is about \$195,000, less than half the city's median.

"Lansing, to this day, still has kids outside in the summertime playing," said Jerrell Miller. "You don't really get that in the city without worry."

The growing Black population prompted Micaela Smith, who moved to Lansing in 2002, to seek office. She became the suburb's first Black trustee last year, after a challenging campaign in the predominantly white suburb.

"I had to do more persuasion to convince the voters," Smith said.

Activists say Lansing has had its fair share of issues involving race. In 2017, a Black teenager was held down and threatened by a white off-duty police officer, a confrontation that led the city to enter a memorandum of understanding with activists and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Pastor David Bigsby of In The Upper Room Ministries recently held a community call about disproportionate traffic stops, noting a major thoroughfare largely divides Black and white residents.

"It's still segregated in town," he said.

Still, the 76-year-old, who moved into the parsonage six years ago, has about 250 congregants now, an increase of about 20%.

Lansing is also seeing a boost in Black-owned businesses. Cain and Cousins-Cain opened their chic S.L. Wine Bar last year, with R&B and jazz setting the mood. Support, particularly from Black customers, has been strong.

"We want our own version of 'Cheers,'" Cousins said.

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Roseland residents who remain take pride in Obama's work there, and say they've seen signs of a turnaround.

Chicago officials recently launched a \$750 million program to improve neglected neighborhoods, including Roseland, and have detailed plans for a train line extension. The Greater Roseland Chamber of Commerce hopes a community hospital will grow into a medical district.

Judy Ware is preparing to resume table service at the Ranch after struggling through the coronavirus pandemic. A fire set during unrest following George Floyd's killing in Minneapolis destroyed the restaurant's interior, and takeout-only couldn't sustain the business, which has been operating for more than 50 years.

After renaming it Ware Ranch Steak House and installing new flooring and orange booths, Ware is feeling optimistic as she prepares to reopen this month.

"If we can weather the storm, I think we'll come out good on the other side," she said. "There is a lot of stuff waiting to happen in Roseland."

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/03/13/ukraine-passenger-train-civilians-fleeing-comes-under-fire-refugees/3621647195605/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/03/13/ukraine-passenger-train-civilians-fleeing-comes-under-fire-refugees/3621647195605/</a>
GIST	<p>March 13 (UPI) -- A passenger train carrying civilians fleeing fighting in eastern Ukraine was fired on by Russian forces, officials with the country's national train service said.</p> <p>Ukraine Railways <a href="#">said in a statement</a> on Sunday that one of the conductors of this train was killed and another was injured and taken to Slovyansk Hospital.</p> <p>Railroad officials said the train had been on a route to pick up passengers from the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine, which have been held by Russian-backed separatists and recognized by Russia as independent republics in the days before the invasion.</p> <p>The train was near the Brusyn station in the Donetsk region on its way to the city of Lyman when it came under fire, officials said.</p> <p>Railroad officials said that another train would be sent to evacuate the surviving crew members onboard the damaged train as well as passengers, including about 100 children.</p> <p>The national railroad service said 33 train workers have been killed during the invasion and that two million Ukrainians, mostly women and children, had evacuated the country by train.</p> <p>Pavlo Kyrilenko, the governor of the Donetsk region, said <a href="#">in a statement on Telegram</a> that the Kramatorsk-Lviv evacuation train was fired on during an air raid.</p> <p>"The occupiers crossed all possible boundaries of common sense and humanity. They must receive proper punishment for their hellish crimes!" Kyrilenko said.</p> <p>Filippo Grandi, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, said <a href="#">in a statement</a> on Sunday that more people are seeking shelter away from their homes as airstrikes and shelling intensify in Ukraine.</p> <p>"The Ukrainian authorities, brave citizens and humanitarian agencies help as they can, in spite of huge risks," Grandi said. "Targeting civilian people and structures violates international law."</p> <p>Data from the UNHCR shows that 2,698,280 people have fled Ukraine as of Saturday, jumping by more than 200,000 in just a day.</p> <p>About 1.7 million of the refugees have fled to Poland alone while 246,206 have fled to Hungary, 195,980 to Slovakia, 104,929 to Moldova and 84,671 to Romania.</p> <p>The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights said <a href="#">in a report on Friday</a> that the agency remains "gravely concerned" about the rising death toll in Ukraine.</p> <p>"We have so far recorded 549 civilian deaths and 957 injuries since the armed attack began on 24 February, although the actual figure could be much higher," Liz Throssell, the spokesperson for the agency, said in the report.</p> <p>"Civilians are being killed and maimed in what appear to be indiscriminate attacks, with Russian forces using explosive weapons with wide-area effects in or near populated areas. These include missiles, heavy artillery shells and rockets, as well as airstrikes."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Russia continues to arrest protesters</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/03/13/russia-continues-arrest-protestors-ukraine-invasion/9331647201141/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/03/13/russia-continues-arrest-protestors-ukraine-invasion/9331647201141/</a>



**GIST**

March 13 (UPI) -- Russia has continued to arrest protesters against the Ukraine invasion as tens of thousands of protesters demonstrated in cities across Europe on Sunday.

The extent of protests in Russia have been difficult to document since Russian President Vladimir Putin approved laws criminalizing speaking out against the Russian military and targeting journalists who report what the government considers to be "false news" about the invasion.

OVD-Info, an independent human rights watchdog in Russia, [has reported](#) that there were at least 866 arrests on Sunday and that there have been more than 14,000 people detained in cities across the country for anti-war action since the start of the invasion on Feb. 24.

Luka Zatravkin, the son of artist Nikas Safronov, was arrested in Moscow on Sunday for handcuffing himself to the entrance of a McDonald's restaurant while blaming Russia for their departure from the country, according to OVD-Info.

McDonald's and Starbucks [announced Tuesday](#) that they would close all of their locations in Russia over the ongoing "humanitarian crisis" in Ukraine. McDonald's has more than 800 stores in the country after becoming the first American chain restaurant to open during the end of the Soviet Union.

"Now we are being deprived of the very ideas of democracy and the values of human rights, showing that freedom is a fiction. Because politicians from world powers can take away our freedoms with the stroke of a pen," Zatravkin said in a [post to Telegram](#).

"This is a real genocide of the common people, who are going to create unbearable living conditions. Because along with violent prohibitions, all our moral and social postulates collapse."

Another man, a resident of St. Petersburg, was arrested for "Putin is a fascist!" messages at a war memorial honoring soldiers who died in the siege of Leningrad during World War II.

In a series of press releases, the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Russia has noted that those arrested and charged have all been found guilty of their offenses.

Bernard Smith, a reporter for Al-Jazeera, [said in a report](#) from the outlet that "it's very difficult for people to go to the streets and protest" and that one woman was dragged away while holding a blank piece of white paper.

"Anyone trying to go out or looking like a protester has been violently dragged away," Smith said.

In the Ukrainian city Kherson, which has been taken over by Russian forces, hundreds of demonstrators protested suspected Russian plans to turn the region into a breakaway republic, [CNN reported](#).

Protesters waved Ukrainian flags and chanted anti-Russian slogans including "Kherson is Ukrainian" and "Russian soldiers are fascists."

Meanwhile, the nonprofit group Greenpeace [estimated on Twitter](#) that more than 125,000 people had protested on the streets of German cities on Sunday. More than 60,000 people were estimated to have protested in Berlin alone.

Protesters were seen carrying signs in English urging "Peace No War" and boycotts against Russian oil and gas, photos posted to social media show.

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**HEADLINE** 03/14 Australia fresh round Russia sanctions

**SOURCE** [https://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2022/03/14/australia-sanctions-Russian-oligarchs/9851647242829/](https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/03/14/australia-sanctions-Russian-oligarchs/9851647242829/)

GIST	<p>March 14 (UPI) -- Australia announced a fresh round of sanctions targeting 33 Russian oligarchs, including Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich, and other prominent businessmen over their country's attack on Ukraine.</p> <p>The new punitive measures come as Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky has called on world leaders to increase sanctions upon Moscow as its offensive enters its 19th day.</p> <p>Marise Payne, the minister of foreign affairs, said the new sanctions target wealthy Russians who hold economic and strategic signification to the country, including those in Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle.</p> <p>Alexey Miller, chief executive officer of gas company Gazprom; Dmitri Lebedev, chairman of air carrier Rossiya; and Kirill Dmitriev, chief executive officer of Russian Direct Investment Fund, were among those named for sanctions by Canberra on Monday.</p> <p>"Australia has joined with our partners in establishing strong, sequential sanctions, with over 460 sanctions place on individuals and entities in the past weeks," she said in a statement. "We will continue to coordinate closely with our partners to impose a high cost on Russia for its actions."</p> <p>The sanctions are in line with those imposed by other democratic countries, including Canada, the United States and the European Union.</p> <p>On Sunday, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva told CBS' Face the Nation that the sanctions have already taken a severe bite out of Russia's economy, and that they expect it to enter a "deep recession."</p> <p>"In terms of servicing debt obligations, I can say that no longer we think of Russian default as improbable event," she said. "Russia has the money to service its debt, but cannot access it."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/14 IMF: Russia to experience deep recession</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/03/14/IMF-predicts-recession/7381647228349/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/03/14/IMF-predicts-recession/7381647228349/</a>
GIST	<p>March 14 (UPI) -- The International Monetary Fund said Sunday that it expects Moscow to experience a "deep recession" as sanctions applied against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine have already had a severe effect upon its population and economy.</p> <p>Kristalina Georgieva, the IMF's managing director, told CBS' <a href="#">Face the Nation</a> on Sunday that the sanctions have already caused Russia's economy to contract, shrinking the public's incomes and spending power along with the depreciation of the ruble, the currency of Russia.</p> <p>"We expect a deep recession in Russia," she said, adding, "In terms of servicing debt obligations, I can say that no longer we think of Russian default as improbable event. Russia has the money to service its debt, but cannot access it."</p> <p>Russia invaded Ukraine Feb. 24, and in response democratic nations, including the United States, Canada, the 27-member European Union and several others imposed wide-reaching sanctions against Russian banks, oligarchs and entities while several Westerner businesses have also announced full pull-outs of the nation or suspensions of operations, dealing a heavy blow to Moscow's economy.</p> <p>Asked if the situation could spark an international financial crisis, Georgieva said not for now but the exposure of about \$120 billion in Russian banks will result in the IMF downgrading growth rate projections for the year though she expects them to still be positive.</p>



	<p>The worry right now for the IMF lies with countries neighboring Russia and Ukraine, she said, due to their economic ties with the warring nations and their accepting of the brunt of nearly 2.7 million Ukrainian refugees who have fled the war.</p> <p>The two other groups of countries the IMF are concerned with are those that have yet to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and those, including the United States, that rely on Russia to meet their energy needs.</p> <p>"War in Ukraine means hunger in Africa, but war in Ukraine also has social implications for many, many countries," she said.</p> <p>The IMF last week <a href="#">disbursed</a> \$1.4 billion to Ukraine in an effort to mitigate some of the effects of the war, and she remarked that the Kyiv authorities "have been remarkable," considering the situation.</p> <p>"We had negotiations on this \$1.4 billion and my staff tells me they can hear the air raid sirens, and yet works go on," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/14 Iran: US decision to revive nuclear deal</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-foreign-ministry-spokesperson-says-us-has-take-decision-revive-nuclear-deal-2022-03-14/">https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-foreign-ministry-spokesperson-says-us-has-take-decision-revive-nuclear-deal-2022-03-14/</a>
GIST	<p>DUBAI, March 14 (Reuters) - The United States needs to make a decision to revive the Iran nuclear deal, Tehran's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday amid fears that talks in Vienna to revive a 2015 agreement may collapse.</p> <p>Talks to salvage the pact were in danger after a last-minute Russian demand forced world powers to pause negotiations for an undetermined time despite having a largely completed text.</p> <p>Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian will visit Russia on Tuesday, Khatibzadeh said, without elaborating.</p> <p>"We are currently having a breather from the nuclear talks," said Khatibzadeh.</p> <p>"We are not at a point of announcing an agreement now since there are some important open issues that need to be decided upon by Washington."</p> <p>Still, Iranian officials seemed cautiously optimistic in assessing the future of the negotiations, which have lasted 11 months.</p> <p>"We will remain in the Vienna talks until our legal and logical demands are met and a strong agreement is reached," Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, which makes the decisions in the Vienna talks, said in a tweet.</p> <p><b>ERBIL</b></p> <p>Aside from the differences over the Vienna talks, tensions have also been rising since Iran attacked Iraq's northern city of Erbil on Sunday with a dozen ballistic missiles in an unprecedented assault on the capital of the autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region that appeared to target the United States and its allies.</p> <p>Iranian state media said Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps carried out the attack against Israeli "strategic centres" in Erbil, suggesting it was revenge for recent Israeli air strikes that killed Iranian military personnel in Syria.</p> <p>Tehran had warned Iraqi authorities many times that its territory should not be used by third parties to conduct attacks against Iran, Khatibzadeh said.</p>

	<p>"The central government of Iraq has the responsibility to ensure that its territory is not used as a base for attacks by third parties against Iran," said Khatibzadeh.</p> <p>"Several times in the past, Iraq's territory was used against Iran by third parties including terrorist groups such as Kurdish militants, the United States and the Zionist entity," he added, referring to Israel.</p> <p>In another setback for regional diplomacy, Iran said on Sunday it was suspending a fifth round of talks due this week in Baghdad with regional rival Saudi Arabia.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 US: consequences to China aiding Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsmax.com/world/globaltalk/military-equipment/2022/03/13/id/1060974/">https://www.newsmax.com/world/globaltalk/military-equipment/2022/03/13/id/1060974/</a>
GIST	<p>A U.S. official said Russia asked China for military equipment to use in its invasion of Ukraine, a request that heightened tensions about the ongoing war ahead of a Monday meeting in Rome between top aides for the U.S. and Chinese governments.</p> <p>In advance of the talks, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan bluntly warned China to avoid helping Russia evade punishment from global sanctions that have hammered the Russian economy. "We will not allow that to go forward," he said.</p> <p>The prospect of China offering Russia financial help is one of several concerns for President Joe Biden. A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, said that in recent days, Russia had requested support from China, including military equipment, to press forward in its ongoing war with Ukraine. The official did not provide details on the scope of the request. The request was first reported by the Financial Times and The Washington Post.</p> <p>The Biden administration is also accusing China of spreading Russian disinformation that could be a pretext for Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces to attack Ukraine with chemical or biological weapons.</p> <p>Russia's invasion of Ukraine has put China in a delicate spot with two of its biggest trading partners: the U.S. and European Union. China needs access to those markets, yet it also has shown support for Moscow, joining with Russia in declaring a friendship with "no limits."</p> <p>In his talks with senior Chinese foreign policy adviser Yang Jiechi, Sullivan will indeed be looking for limits in what Beijing will do for Moscow.</p> <p>"I'm not going to sit here publicly and brandish threats," he told CNN in a round of Sunday news show interviews. "But what I will tell you is we are communicating directly and privately to Beijing that there absolutely will be consequences" if China helps Russia "backfill" its losses from the sanctions.</p> <p>"We will not allow that to go forward and allow there to be a lifeline to Russia from these economic sanctions from any country anywhere in the world," he said.</p> <p>In brief comments on the talks, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian did not mention Ukraine, saying that the "key issue of this meeting is to implement the important consensus reached by the Chinese and U.S. heads of state in their virtual summit in November last year."</p> <p>"They will exchange views on China-U.S. relations and international and regional issues of common concern," Zhao said in comments posted on the ministry's website late Sunday.</p> <p>The White House said the talks will focus on the direct impact of Russia's war against Ukraine on regional and global security.</p>

Biden administration officials say Beijing is spreading false Russian claims that Ukraine was running chemical and biological weapons labs with U.S. support. They say China is effectively providing cover if Russia moves ahead with a biological or chemical weapons attack on Ukrainians.

When Russia starts accusing other countries of preparing to launch biological or chemical attacks, Sullivan told NBC's "Meet the Press," "it's a good tell that they may be on the cusp of doing it themselves."

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby, on ABC's "This Week," said "we haven't seen anything that indicates some sort of imminent chemical or biological attack right now, but we're watching this very, very closely."

The striking U.S. accusations about Russian disinformation and Chinese complicity came after Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova alleged with no evidence that the U.S. was financing Ukrainian chemical and biological weapons labs.

The Russian claim was echoed by Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian, who claimed there were 26 bio-labs and related facilities in "which the U.S. Department of Defense has absolute control." The United Nations has said it has received no information backing up such accusations.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki called the claims "preposterous."

There is growing concern inside the White House that China is aligning itself with Russia on the Ukraine war in hopes it will advance Beijing's "vision of the world order" in the long term, according to a person familiar with administration thinking. The person was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Sullivan told "Face the Nation" on CBS that the Russian rhetoric on chemical and biological warfare is "an indicator that, in fact, the Russians are getting ready to do it and try and pin the blame elsewhere and nobody should fall for that."

The international community has assessed that Russia used chemical weapons in attempts to assassinate Putin detractors such as Alexei Navalny and former spy Sergei Skripal. Russia also supports the Assad government in Syria, which has used chemical weapons against its people in a decadelong civil war.

China has been one of few countries to avoid criticizing the Russians for its invasion of Ukraine. China's leader Xi Jinping hosted Putin for the opening of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, just three weeks before Russia invaded on Feb. 24.

During Putin's visit, the two leaders issued a 5,000-word statement declaring limitless friendship.

The Chinese abstained on U.N. votes censuring Russia and has criticized economic sanctions against Moscow. It has expressed its support for peace talks and offered its services as a mediator, despite questions about its neutrality and scant experience mediating international conflict.

But questions remain over how far Beijing will go to alienate the West and put its own economy at risk. Sullivan said China and all countries are on notice that they cannot "basically bail Russia out ... give Russia a workaround to the sanctions," with impunity.

Chinese officials have said Washington shouldn't be able to complain about Russia's actions because the U.S. invaded Iraq under false pretenses. The U.S. claimed to have evidence Saddam Hussein was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction though none was ever found.

On CNN, Sullivan said the administration believes China knew that Putin "was planning something" before the invasion of Ukraine. But he said the Chinese government "may not have understood the full extent of it because it's very possible that Putin lied to them the same way that he lied to Europeans and others."

	<p>Sullivan and Yang last met for face-to-face talks in Switzerland, where Sullivan raised the Biden administration's concerns about China's military provocations against Taiwan, human rights abuses against ethnic minorities and efforts to squelch pro-democracy advocates in Hong Kong.</p> <p>That meeting set the stage for a three-hour long virtual meeting in November between Biden and Xi.</p> <p>Sullivan is also to meet Luigi Mattiolo, diplomatic adviser to Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, while in Rome.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/14 US: Putin angry, likely to escalate war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-nato-william-burns-europe-1271f76008b3e639df6ff21e3644e339">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-nato-william-burns-europe-1271f76008b3e639df6ff21e3644e339</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — More than two weeks into a war he expected to dominate in two days, Vladimir Putin is projecting anger, frustration at his military's failures and a willingness to cause even more violence and destruction in Ukraine, in the assessment of U.S. intelligence officials.</p> <p>Officials in recent days have publicly said they're worried the Russian president will escalate the conflict to try to break Ukraine's resistance. Russia still holds overwhelming military advantages and can bombard the country for weeks more. And while the rest of the world reacts to horrific images of the war he started, Putin remains insulated from domestic pressure by what CIA Director William Burns called a "propaganda bubble."</p> <p>Putin's mindset — as tough as it is to determine from afar — is critical for the West to understand as it provides more military aid to Ukraine and also prevent Putin from directly taking on NATO countries or possibly reaching for the nuclear button. Intelligence officials over two days of testimony before Congress last week openly voiced concerns about what Putin might do. And those concerns increasingly shape discussions about what U.S. policymakers are willing to do for Ukraine.</p> <p><a href="#">Over two decades</a>, Putin has achieved total dominance of Russia's government and security services, ruling with a tiny inner circle, marginalizing dissent, and jailing or killing his opposition. He has long criticized the breakup of the Soviet Union, dismissed Ukraine's claims to sovereignty, and mused about nuclear war ending with <a href="#">Russians as "martyrs."</a> Burns told lawmakers that he believed Putin was "stewing in a combustible combination of grievance and ambition for many years."</p> <p>Putin had expected to seize Kyiv in two days, Burns said. Instead, his military has failed to take control of major cities and lost several thousand soldiers already. The West has imposed sanctions and other measures that have crippled the Russian economy and diminished living standards for oligarchs and ordinary citizens alike. Much of the foreign currency Russia had accumulated as a bulwark against sanctions is now frozen in banks abroad.</p> <p>Burns is a former U.S. ambassador to Moscow who has met with Putin many times. He told lawmakers in response to a question about the Russian president's mental state that he did not believe Putin was crazy.</p> <p>"I think Putin is angry and frustrated right now," he said. "He's likely to double down and try to grind down the Ukrainian military with no regard for civilian casualties."</p> <p>Russia's recent <a href="#">unsupported claims</a> that the U.S. is helping Ukraine develop chemical or biological weapons suggest that Putin may himself be prepared to deploy those weapons in a "false flag" operation, Burns said.</p> <p>There's <a href="#">no apparent path</a> to ending the war. It is nearly inconceivable that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has won admiration around the world for leading his country's resistance, would suddenly recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea or support granting new autonomy to Russian-friendly parts of</p>

eastern Ukraine. And even if he captures Kyiv and deposes Zelenskyy, Putin would have to account for an insurgency supported by the West in a country of more than 40 million.

“He has no sustainable political end-game in the face of what is going to continue to be fierce resistance from Ukrainians,” Burns said.

Avril Haines, President Joe Biden’s director of national intelligence, said Putin “perceives this as a war he cannot afford to lose. But what he might be willing to accept as a victory may change over time given the significant costs he is incurring.”

Intelligence analysts think Putin’s recent raising of Russia’s nuclear alert level was “probably intended to deter the West from providing additional support to Ukraine,” she said.

The White House’s concern about escalation has at times frustrated both Democrats and Republicans. After initially signaling support, the Biden administration declined in recent days to support a Polish plan to donate Soviet-era warplanes to Ukraine that would have required the U.S. to participate in the transfer. The administration previously delayed sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and would not send Stinger air-defense missiles to Ukraine before changing course.

Questioned on Thursday, Haines said Putin might see the plane transfer as a bigger deal than the anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons already going to Ukraine. Haines did not disclose whether the U.S. had intelligence to support that finding.

U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, an Illinois Democrat who sits on the House Intelligence Committee, said the Biden administration had been “always a step or two late” out of fear of triggering Putin. He urged the White House to agree quickly to the transfer of planes.

“I think it comes off as quibbling,” Quigley said. “If anyone thinks that Putin is going to distinguish and differentiate — ‘Oh, well, they’re taking off from Poland’ — he sees all of this as escalatory.”

Meanwhile, as the violence worsens and more Russians die, the West is also watching for any sign of holes forming in Putin’s “propaganda bubble.” One independent Russian political analyst, Kirill Rogov, posted on his Telegram account that the war is “lost” and an “epic failure.”

“The mistake was the notion that the West was unwilling to resist aggression, that it was lethargic, greedy and divided,” Rogov wrote. “The idea that the Russian economy is self-sufficient and secure was a mistake. The mistake was the idea of the quality of the Russian army. And the main mistake was the idea that Ukraine is a failed state, and Ukrainians are not a nation.

“Four mistakes in making one decision is a lot,” he said.

Before the invasion, polling conducted by the Levada Center, Russia’s top independent opinion research firm, found that 60% of respondents consider the U.S. and NATO the “initiators” of conflict in eastern Ukraine. Just 3% answered Russia. The polling was in January and February, and the Levada Center has not published new polling since the war began.

Outsiders hope ordinary Russians will respond to the sharp decline in their living standards and find honest portrayals of the war through relatives and online, including by using VPN software to bypass Kremlin blocks on social media. Russian state television continues to air false or unsupported allegations about the U.S. and Ukrainian governments and push a narrative that Russia can’t afford to lose the war.

“Otherwise, it will lead to the death of Russia itself,” said Vladimir Solovyov, host of a prime-time talk show on state TV channel Russia 1, on his daily radio show last week.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/europe/russia-exiles-putin-ukraine-war.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/europe/russia-exiles-putin-ukraine-war.html</a>
GIST	<p>ISTANBUL — They lined up at ATM’s, desperate for cash after Visa and Mastercard suspended operations in <a href="#">Russia</a>, swapping intelligence on where they could still get dollars. At Istanbul cafes, they sat quietly studying Telegram chats or Google Maps on their phones. They organized support groups to help other Russian exiles find housing.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of Russians have fled to Istanbul since <a href="#">Russia invaded Ukraine</a> last month, outraged about what they see as a criminal war, worried about conscription or the possibility of a closed Russian border, or concerned that their livelihoods are no longer viable back home.</p> <p>And they are just the tip of the iceberg. Tens of thousands more traveled to countries like Armenia, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan which are better known as sources of migration to Russia. At the land border with Latvia — open only to those with European visas — travelers reported waits lasting hours.</p> <p>While the exodus of <a href="#">about 2.7 million Ukrainians</a> from their war-torn country has focused the world on a burgeoning humanitarian crisis, the descent of Russia into new depths of authoritarianism has many Russians despairing of their future. That has created a flight — though much smaller than in Ukraine — that some are comparing to 1920, when more than 100,000 opponents of the Communist Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War left to seek refuge in what was then Constantinople.</p> <p>“There has never been anything like this before in peacetime,” said Konstantin Sonin, a Russian economist at the University of Chicago. “There is no war on Russian territory. As a single event, it is pretty huge.”</p> <p>Some who have fled are bloggers, journalists or activists who feared arrest under Russia’s draconian new law criminalizing what the state deems “false information” about the war.</p> <p>Others are musicians and artists who see no future for their crafts in Russia. And there are workers in tech, law and other industries who saw the prospect of comfortable, middle-class lives — let alone any possibility for moral acceptance of their government — dissipate overnight.</p> <p>They left behind jobs and family and money stuck in Russian bank accounts which they can no longer access. They fear being tarred as Russians abroad as the West isolates the country for its deadly invasion, and they reel over the loss of a positive Russian identity.</p> <p>“They didn’t just take away our future,” Polina Borodina, a Moscow playwright, said of her government’s war in Ukraine. “They took away our past.”</p> <p>The speed and scale of the flight reflect the tectonic shift the invasion touched off inside Russia. For all of President Vladimir V. Putin’s repression, Russia until last month remained a place with extensive travel connections to the rest of the world, a mostly uncensored internet giving a platform to independent media, a thriving tech industry and a world-class arts scene. Slices of Western middle-class life — Ikea, Starbucks, affordable foreign cars — were widely available.</p> <p>But when they woke up on Feb. 24, many Russians knew that all that was over. Dmitri Aleshkovsky, a journalist who spent years promoting Russia’s emerging culture of charitable giving, got in his car the next day and drove to Latvia.</p> <p>“It became totally clear that if this red line has been crossed, nothing will hold him back anymore,” Mr. Aleshkovsky said of Mr. Putin. “Things will only get worse.”</p> <p>In the days since the invasion, Mr. Putin has forced the remnants of Russia’s independent media to shut down. He has engineered a brutal crackdown against antiwar protesters, with more than 14,000 people arrested across the country since Feb. 24, including 862 in 37 cities on Sunday, according to the rights group OVD-Info.</p>



To be sure, many Russians support the war, and many of those supporters are completely unaware of the extent of Russia's aggression because they rely on state-run television news.

But others have flocked to places like Istanbul, which, like in 1920, has again become a haven for exiles. While most of Europe has closed its skies, Turkish Airlines has been flying from Moscow as much as five times a day; combined with other airlines, more than 30 flights arrive from Russia on some days.

"History moves in a spiral, that of Russia especially," said Kirill Nabutov, 64, a St. Petersburg sports commentator who fled to Istanbul with his wife this month. "It comes back to the same place — back to this same place."

Mr. Nabutov's mother's first cousin was an 18-year-old conscript sailor in Crimea when he evacuated with the commander Pyotr Wrangel's fleet to Constantinople in 1920. He traveled on to Tunis, where he became an insurance agent.

Now, too, a generation of Russian exiles faces the daunting prospect of starting from scratch. And all face the gnawing reality of being seen as representing a country that launched a war of aggression, even though many insist they have spent their lives opposing Mr. Putin.

In Georgia — where, the government says, 20,000 Russians have arrived since the start of the war — exiles have faced an intimidating environment, full of anti-Russian graffiti and hostile comments on social media.

"We tried to explain that Russians are not Putin — we hate Putin, too," said Leyla Nepesova, an activist from Memorial International, a Russian rights group recently shuttered by the Kremlin. Ms. Nepesova, 26, escaped to Georgia a week ago and has found herself tainted by association — sworn at in the street and shouted at by a taxi driver.

"He told us, 'You are Russians, you are occupiers,'" Ms. Nepesova said. "Russians are hated here — and I cannot blame them."

Many Georgians see clear parallels between the Ukraine invasion and Russia's war on Georgia in 2008. And while most have been welcoming to the new arrivals, some have not distinguished between Russian dissidents who have fled Russia for security or moral reasons and those who support Mr. Putin.

The Bank of Georgia has demanded that new Russian customers sign a statement denouncing Mr. Putin's invasion and acknowledging Russia's occupation of parts of Georgia — a problematic request to make of anyone hoping to return to Russia.

Some Georgians have even called on landlords to refuse tenancy to Russian arrivals.

"Your hands are dirty," said a Georgian vigilante fighter currently volunteering in Ukraine, in an online video that was addressed to landlords, banks and politicians in Georgia. "Every single one of you," the fighter, Nodari Karalashvili, added, "why are you selling all of this? With what price of blood?"

In neighboring Armenia, where the government says several thousand Russians have been arriving daily, the exiles report receiving a better welcome. Davur Dordzheir, 25, said he quit his job as a lawyer with Russia's state-owned Sberbank, organized his financial affairs, made out a will and said goodbye to his mother. He flew to the Armenian capital, Yerevan, worried that his past public comments against the Russian government could make him a target.

"I realized that since the start of this war, I am an enemy of the state along with thousands of Russians," he said.

In Istanbul, Ms. Borodina, the playwright, who arrived on March 5, has already lined up a designer and a Turkish printing shop to make Ukrainian flag pins for Russians to wear. It is part of her effort, she says, to

“save this identity” of a Russia separate from Mr. Putin. She believes it is fair for Ukrainians to espouse hatred now for all Russians. But she is critical of people in the West who say that every Russian bears responsibility for Mr. Putin.

“Have you lived under a dictatorship?” Ms. Borodina, 31, whose work has told the stories of Russians imprisoned for years after protesting, said she would ask those Westerners. “Do you know what the consequences of these protests can be?”

Some exiled Russians are trying to organize mutual aid efforts and seeking to counter anti-Russian sentiment. Mr. Aleshkovsky, the journalist, 37, said he cried every day for the first five days of the war and suffered panic attacks. Then, he said, “I pulled myself together and realized I needed to do what I know how to do.” He and several colleagues are organizing an initiative tentatively called “OK Russians” to help those forced to or trying to depart and to produce media content in English and in Russian.

Mikhail B. Khodorkovsky, the exiled oil tycoon who spent 10 years imprisoned in Russia, is funding a project called Kovcheg — “The Ark” — which is providing housing in Istanbul and Yerevan and is looking for psychologists to offer emotional support. Since its kickoff on Thursday, it has received some 10,000 inquiries.

When Irina Lobanovskaya, the director of marketing at an artificial intelligence firm, started a chat group about emigration in the messaging app Telegram, she began with 10 people who shared tips about visas and work permits. The group now has more than 106,000 members.

“I am a midwife, a lactation specialist, who ran away from Moscow with an almost 18-year-old son,” one woman wrote, asking for advice for exiled health care professionals. “We are sitting in Prague, trying to figure out how to live on.”

The pain of leaving everything behind has been excruciating, many said — along with the guilt of perhaps not having done enough to fight Mr. Putin. Alevtina Borodulina, 30, an anthropologist, joined more than 4,700 Russian scientists in signing an open letter against the war. Then, as she walked with friends on central Moscow’s Boulevard Ring, one of them pulled out a tote bag that said “no to war” and promptly got arrested.

She flew to Istanbul on March 3, met like-minded Russians at a protest supporting Ukraine and now volunteers for the Kovcheg project to help other exiles.

“It was like I was seeing the Soviet Union,” Ms. Borodulina said of her last days in Moscow. “I was thinking that the people who left the Soviet Union in the 1920s probably made a better decision than those who stayed and then ended up in the camps.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/14 Day 19 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/14/ukraine-war-everything-we-know-on-day-19-of-the-russian-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/14/ukraine-war-everything-we-know-on-day-19-of-the-russian-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Russia’s defence ministry has admitted responsibility for a <a href="#">rocket attack</a> on the International Centre for Peacekeeping and Security, a military base, near the Polish border on Sunday.</b></li><li>• <b>The death toll from the attack <a href="#">rose to 35 people</a>. British prime minister Boris Johnson called Russia’s actions barbaric and said it was a test of all of humanity. US secretary of state Antony <a href="#">Blinken condemned the attack</a>, saying the brutality must stop.</b></li><li>• <b>A pregnant woman and her baby have died after Russia bombed the maternity hospital where she was meant to give birth</b>, the Associated Press reported. Images of the woman being rushed to an ambulance on a stretcher had been published around the world.</li><li>• <b>Two people were killed after a shell hit a residential building in Kyiv</b> on Monday morning. Three others were injured in the attack, Ukraine’s emergency services said.</li></ul>

- **Ukraine president Zelenskiy [again urged Nato to implement a no-fly zone](#)**. “If you don’t close our sky, it is only a matter of time before Russian rockets fall on your territory, on Nato territory,” he said.
- **Russia has [asked China for military equipment](#) since the start of the invasion**, the Financial Times reported. The request has sparked fear in the White House that Beijing may aid Russia and undermine the West’s efforts in Ukraine. China’s US embassy spokesperson said they hadn’t heard about that request and that “the current situation in [Ukraine](#) is indeed disconcerting”.
- US national security adviser **Jake Sullivan is due to meet China’s top diplomat, Yang Jiechi, in Rome on Monday**. Ahead of the meeting, [Sullivan warned that Beijing will “absolutely” face consequences](#) if it helps Moscow evade sanctions over the invasion of Ukraine.
- Sullivan also said **Russia would [pay a “severe price” for a chemical weapons attack](#)**.
- **The UK defence ministry claimed Russian naval forces are “effectively isolating [Ukraine](#) from international maritime trade”**, in its latest defence intelligence update on the situation in Ukraine.
- **[Instagram was reportedly down in Russia](#) after its owner Meta Platforms said** last week it would allow social media users in Ukraine to post messages such as “Death to the Russian invaders”. An email message from the state communications regulator told people to move their photos and videos from Instagram before it was shut down, and encouraged them to switch to Russia’s own “competitive internet platforms”.
- **The chief executive of controversial facial recognition company Clearview AI said the Ukraine defence ministry had [started to use its services](#), according to Reuters**. The ministry was given free access to Clearview AI – a controversial facial recognition software that scrapes images from social media and other platforms – to use during the war.
- **Talks between Russia and Ukraine are due to resume via video link on Monday**. The confirmation of the next round of talks come after [both sides said they were making headway](#) at the negotiations aimed at ending more than two weeks of fighting between the Russian and Ukrainian armies.
- **Ramzan Kadyrov, the leader of Russia’s Chechnya region, is reportedly in Ukraine** alongside Russian forces, according to footage shared by Chechen television channels and posted to Kadyrov’s Telegram account.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/14 Russia, Ukraine talks to resume</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/14/talks-russia-ukraine-resume-after-deadly-attack-on-military-base">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/14/talks-russia-ukraine-resume-after-deadly-attack-on-military-base</a>
GIST	<p>Diplomatic efforts to end the war in Ukraine have stepped up, with Ukrainian and Russian negotiators set to resume talks, <a href="#">after Russia attacked a base near the Polish border</a> and fighting raged across the country.</p> <p>A barrage of Russian missiles hit Ukraine’s Yavoriv International Centre for Peacekeeping and Security, a base just 15 miles (25 km) from the Polish border that has previously hosted Nato military instructors, killing 35 people and wounding 134, a Ukrainian official said on Sunday.</p> <p>On Monday morning the violence continued, with shelling of a residential building in the capital killing two.</p> <p>But hopes of diplomatic progress were raised after <a href="#">Russia</a> and Ukraine gave positive assessments after weekend negotiations.</p> <p>“Russia is already beginning to talk constructively,” Ukrainian negotiator Mykhailo Podolyak said in a video online. “I think that we will achieve some results literally in a matter of days.”</p> <p>A Russian delegate to the talks, Leonid Slutsky, was quoted by the RIA news agency as saying they had made significant progress and it was possible the delegations could soon reach draft agreements.</p>

Neither side said what these would cover. Three rounds of talks between the two sides in Belarus, most recently last Monday, had focused mainly on humanitarian issues.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the countries' delegations have been speaking daily by video link and a clear aim of his negotiators was to "do everything" to arrange for him to meet Putin. "We must hold on. We must fight. And we will win," Zelenskiy said in a late night video speech. Putin said on Friday there had been some "positive shifts" in the talks but did not elaborate.

The talks come after the UK said Russian naval forces had blockaded Ukraine's Black Sea coast and cut the country off from maritime trade.

In an update late Sunday, the UK defence ministry said the "distant blockade" by Russia's navy had effectively isolated Ukraine from maritime trade and forces continued missile strikes on targets across the country.

The ministry also noted that Russia had conducted one amphibious landing in the Sea of Azov and "could look to conduct further such operations in the coming weeks."

The escalation of the conflict to effectively block maritime trade from Ukraine comes as countries stepped up efforts to reach a diplomatic solution to the devastating conflict.

Closely watched talks will also be held on Monday between the US and China, as concerns grow over the possibility of Beijing providing support to Putin's war effort.

Jake Sullivan, the US national security adviser, will meet his Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, in Rome amid reports that [Russia](#) has asked China for weapons to bolster its faltering invasion of Ukraine.

A spokesperson for the US embassy in Washington, Liu Pengyu, told CNN he had "never heard" of the Russian arms requests, noting that China's priority was to ensure the situation does not escalate or get out of control.

The US will try to persuade China not to supply arms to Russia at the talks which the White House sees as critically important not just for the war in [Ukraine](#) but also for the future of the global balance of power.

US president Joe Biden and French president Emmanuel Macron underscored in a call on Sunday their commitment to holding Russia accountable for the invasion of Ukraine, the White House said in a [statement](#). Also on Sunday, US secretary of state Antony Blinken and his Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba, discussed diplomatic efforts to stop Russia's invasion of its neighbour.

The flurry of diplomacy comes as Russia drew warnings from Nato on Sunday after it escalated its war in [Ukraine](#) with strikes on a major military base close to the alliance's border, killing at least 35 people and injuring 134 more, while a US journalist was killed by Russian forces in a town outside Kyiv.

The airstrikes on the Yavoriv base in the far-west of Ukraine came hours after the Kremlin, which said western military equipment destined for Ukrainian forces was being stored at the facility, had described western supply lines into Ukraine as "legitimate targets".

A Russian military spokesperson claimed that up to 180 "foreign mercenaries and a large consignment of foreign weapons" were destroyed in the attack.

Britain said the incident marked a "significant escalation" of the conflict and the proximity of the attack to Poland's border, less than 10 miles away, prompted the US to warn that any fire, even accidental, on a neighbouring Nato country would trigger a full-force Nato response.

	<p>Sullivan said the US was consulting allies and in contact with the Kremlin directly to warn against the use of chemical weapons amid fears that Russia may be preparing the ground for the use of them.</p> <p>Describing the bombing of the Yavoriv International Centre for Peacekeeping and Security, Stepan Chuma, 27, an emergency worker who had hurried to the scene with his colleagues, said: “My windows shook. The whole house vibrated. It was dark. The sky lit up with two explosions.”</p> <p>The attack prompted <a href="#">Zelenskiy</a>, to repeat his pleas for Nato to impose a no-fly zone, and he warned the alliance that it was at risk. “If you don’t close our sky, it is only a matter of time before Russian rockets fall on your territory, on Nato territory,” he said in a video address late last night.</p> <p>The Yavoriv facility hit by Russia on Sunday has previously hosted foreign military trainers from the UK, US and other countries, but it was not clear whether any were at the base. Ukraine held most of its drills with Nato countries there before the invasion, with the last major exercises in September. Nato denied it had any personnel in Ukraine and the Pentagon said its last people had left weeks ago.</p> <p>The attack is thought to be the westernmost carried out by Russia in <a href="#">18 days of fighting</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 US in oil standoff w/Saudi Arabia, UAE</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/white-house-us-joe-biden-oil-output-prices-saudi-arabia-uae">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/white-house-us-joe-biden-oil-output-prices-saudi-arabia-uae</a>
GIST	<p>Joe Biden’s hardline stance on Russia has won him widespread plaudits, but with the most serious oil shock in decades now a reality, the US president’s attempt to cushion the blowback continues to meet resistance from the two allies he needs most.</p> <p>Saudi Arabia’s de facto leader, Mohammed bin Salman, and his counterpart in the United Arab Emirates, Mohammed bin Zayed, are <a href="#">yet to agree to a phone call</a> with the west’s most powerful man – a scenario all but unthinkable during previous administrations.</p> <p>Biden’s immediate priority is for both countries to help exert maximum economic pressure on Russia by cranking up their oil output. Each capital is a major supplier of oil, with excess capacity, which would soften the effect on US consumers through fuel prices before midterm elections in November that threaten Democratic control of Congress.</p> <p>With relations between the Middle East oil powers and Washington at their lowest ebb in modern times, though, a reckoning is due that may realign the regional order on terms that favour Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Both leaders have made it clear that they will settle for nothing less, and are ready to extract their price.</p> <p>As if to show the Biden administration what it could do, the UAE ambassador to Washington, Yousef al-Otaiba, last Wednesday said it favoured production increases “and will be encouraging Opec to consider higher production levels”, leading oil prices to fall by 13% the next day. But no action to increase supply followed and by the week’s end the price per barrel was back up to almost \$130 (£100), an uncomfortably high level for Biden to take to the midterms.</p> <p>However, the standoff involves far more than oil. In Riyadh, Prince Mohammed feels snubbed by Biden’s refusal to engage with him ever since he took office. The murder of the Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi by the crown prince’s security aides, the war on Yemen, the jailing of rights activists and the boycott of Qatar have made him a pariah to the administration.</p> <p>Disputes with Abu Dhabi are nearly as stark. The US has been particularly taken aback by UAE’s repeated abstentions in the UN security council, which have been seen by western diplomats in New York as a quid pro quo for Russian support of some of the anti-Houthi positions it wanted the council to take over the war in Yemen.</p>

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been incensed by the Biden administration removing the Iran-backed Houthis from the global terror list as they continue a painstaking series of negotiations with Iran to restart the Obama-era nuclear deal shredded by Donald Trump.

Beyond that, though, there is a strong feeling in both capitals that Biden has approached the region with a deeply critical view of countries that had long been security allies, and lenient on Iran, which remains a foe.

Having attempted last week to recruit Venezuela to the cause of isolating Russia, the White House views efforts at repair work on the relationship with Saudi Arabia and the UAE as an acceptable price to pay.

The administration in February sent Brett McGurk, the White House coordinator for Middle East policy, and Amos Hochstein, the state department's special energy envoy, to Riyadh for a meeting with the crown prince. On the eve of the invasion of Ukraine, the Treasury announced sanctions on an alleged Houthi financing network.

Sir John Jenkins, a former British ambassador to Riyadh and a senior fellow at the UK thinktank Policy Exchange, said ties that had been growing between Riyadh and Moscow, particularly since Biden sidelined Prince Mohammed, would probably need to be recalibrated if a reset was to take place.

"I think it's very complicated," he said. "I wouldn't make a one-way bet on Putin myself. But that's how the Saudi position in particular will look to many in DC. That will just piss people off. And tempt them in turn to bet on Iran instead. You have to deal with [Prince Mohammed]. But if he demands a complete climbdown from Biden, I don't think he'll get it.

"There has to be some way of squaring this circle. A renewed US promise to defend KSA [Saudi Arabia] and the UAE from Iran is one way. Redesignation of the Houthis and a renewed commitment to settling Yemen in a way that would suit Riyadh and Abu Dhabi is another. But I can't see Biden saying he's simply going to forget Khashoggi.

"I personally don't think Russia matters that much to KSA. China's far more important. Beijing wants to avoid a collapse of global trade – or a prolonged western recession. And there are signs Beijing is trying to position itself appropriately. The risk then is that a hard line from Riyadh will just backfire."

Robin Mills, the CEO of the UAE-based consultancy Qamar Energy, said increasing oil supply, and therefore reducing prices at the bowser, was a relatively straightforward technical process, but carried political and economic risk in dealings with the global oil body Opec, of which Riyadh and Abu Dhabi are members.

"They could ramp up supply within one month and reach full capacity within 90 days," he said. "Opening chokes on wells, restarting wells entirely, perhaps restarting gathering and production stations.

"Everyone has always cheated on Opec agreements when it suited them. Can you do it quickly? Not tomorrow, certainly. But unless something's gone seriously wrong, KSA should be able to make a three-month difference. That in itself would help – to a degree – in calming oil markets."

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HEADLINE	03/12 Covid on descent, travel at SEA takes off
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3387723/sea-tac-airport-travel-increase-march-2022/">https://mynorthwest.com/3387723/sea-tac-airport-travel-increase-march-2022/</a>
GIST	<p>As the COVID-19 pandemic seems to wind down, people are champing at the bit to get in the sky again. And nowhere in the region is this perhaps more evident than at Sea-Tac International Airport.</p> <p>At a recent visit to Sea-Tac, KIRO Newsradio observed crowds of people in baggage claim, and numbers of travelers are projected to only increase steadily as winter ends and spring break approaches.</p>



Perry Cooper, senior manager of media relations for aviation with the Port of Seattle, said the port is expecting this summer to be the busiest since the pandemic started.

“Our projection is, we’ll be a little bit less than 5% for the year under what we were in 2019, pre-pandemic,” he said. “And then in 2023, getting almost back to normal.”

Travelers who spoke with KIRO Newsradio said they felt safe flying again due to the falling COVID cases and the strict precautions being observed in airports and on aircraft. The TSA just extended the air travel mask mandate through at least April 18, 2022.

“It’s pretty safe because the protocol has been maintained really strictly,” said Kuntla Sarkar, who was making her first international flight since the pandemic began, from India to Seattle. “Everyone is wearing a mask and maintaining social distance, so it’s really nice.”

“It helps that the airports have been very clean,” added Kevin Kreis, who was flying back to Seattle from Georgia.

And with increased ease around travel, they spoke of wanting to fly more this summer.

“We’re trying to plan [a vacation] with our kids — California, probably,” said Ellen Navarro, who was flying back to Sea-Tac from Dallas. “We have a lot of family out there, so we’ll probably just go see family.”

Cooper said that planning more travel to make up for lost time is a common theme this year.

“We’re hearing people talk about having the big GOAT [greatest of all time] vacation, which is that grand vacation that they’ve been dreaming about and haven’t had to do for the last two years,” he said.

In response, Sea-Tac has also brought back its international flights, and there will be up to 42 international routes by this summer.

“That actually equals the amount that we had pre-pandemic,” Cooper said.

While not all of the pre-pandemic carriers have returned, Sea-Tac has added some new international routes, such as Qatar last year, and Montreal and Helsinki this year.

Also being unveiled is [Sea-Tac’s new, larger International Arrivals facility](#) — which Cooper said speaks to Seattle’s role on the world stage.

“Seattle is being seen more as a big player to all these airlines because of how fast we’re growing and how the businesses are growing — we’ve actually jumped ahead of other larger cities in the U.S. for some of these services,” Cooper said.

Much of that is due to the tech boom, which has brought workers from all around the world.

Port Commissioner Ryan Calkins, who grew up in Seattle, noted that when he was a kid, a person almost always had to fly through another city to go international. Now, however, Seattle is that gateway to the world.

“Seattle has become a global hub, not just a regional hub, and as a result of that, there’s a demand for international travelers to come,” he said, adding, “Because we are becoming a diverse global community of first-generation immigrants who are coming to work in all the industries that are booming here in our region, it also means that there is demand to come and visit from relatives overseas.”

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-prosecutors-warn-western-companies-of-arrests-asset-seizures-11647206193">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-prosecutors-warn-western-companies-of-arrests-asset-seizures-11647206193</a>
GIST	<p>Russian prosecutors have issued warnings to Western companies in Russia, threatening to arrest corporate leaders there who criticize the government or to seize assets of companies that withdraw from the country, according to people familiar with the matter.</p> <p>Prosecutors delivered the warnings in the past week to companies including <a href="#">Coca-Cola Co.</a> , <a href="#">McDonald's Corp.</a> , <a href="#">Procter &amp; Gamble Co.</a> , <a href="#">International Business Machines Corp.</a> and KFC owner <a href="#">Yum Brands Inc.</a>, the people said. The calls, letters and visits included threats to sue the companies and seize assets including trademarks, the people said.</p> <p>Russian President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a> last week expressed support for a law to nationalize assets of foreign companies that <a href="#">leave his country over its invasion of Ukraine</a>. The prosecutors' warnings were directed at companies across sectors, including technology, food, apparel and banking, the people familiar with the matter said.</p> <p>The warnings have prompted at least one of the targeted companies to limit communications between its Russian business and the rest of the company, out of concern that emails or text messages among colleagues may be intercepted, some of the people said.</p> <p>Other companies have moved to transfer executives out of Russia, other people familiar with the matter said.</p> <p>Spokespeople for Coca-Cola, IBM, <a href="#">P&amp;G</a> and McDonald's declined to comment. A Yum spokeswoman declined to comment beyond the restaurant company's past statements on its decision to pause operations at its KFC and Pizza Hut restaurants in Russia.</p> <p>The Russian Embassy in Washington didn't respond Sunday to a request for comment.</p> <p>A parade of companies have announced plans to suspend or scale back their operations in Russia in the wake of <a href="#">Mr. Putin's invasion of Ukraine</a> and sanctions imposed by Western governments.</p> <p>Many companies, particularly retailers and manufacturers, have said their decisions to stop operations are temporary. Some said they were necessitated by the disruption that sanctions have had on supply chains. Others have committed to leaving for good.</p> <p>Companies are also evaluating their business in Russia in a different way given the economic instability and expectations that conditions will be volatile for some time, according to people briefed on the matter. Despite the prosecutors' warnings, a number of the companies aren't planning to change their decisions to withdraw or suspend operations, the people said. It would also be difficult for companies to smoothly transfer operations to Russia if the government sought to impose its own managers, one of the people said.</p> <p>The Russian prosecutor general's office on Friday said it would ensure that companies that have said they are pausing or exiting operations comply with the country's labor laws. More than 350 foreign companies have said they are leaving or temporarily suspending work in Russia, according to the Yale School of Management.</p> <p>Wall Street banks such as <a href="#">Goldman Sachs Group Inc.</a>, consumer-goods companies such as Coke, retailers such as <a href="#">Levi Strauss &amp; Co.</a> and tech giants such as <a href="#">Apple Inc.</a> have announced <a href="#">plans to pull back</a>. <a href="#">Energy giants</a> such as <a href="#">BP PLC</a> and <a href="#">Exxon Mobil Corp.</a> said they would exit Russian operations.</p> <p>Mr. Putin endorsed a plan floated last week by a senior member of his dominant United Russia party to nationalize the operations of Western companies exiting the country. Such a move would help prevent job losses and maintain Russia's ability to produce goods domestically, said Andrei Turchak, the secretary of the general council of the United Russia party.</p>

Washington warned against a nationalization effort.

“Any lawless decision by Russia to seize the assets of these companies will ultimately result in even more economic pain for Russia” and might invite legal action, White House press secretary Jen Psaki tweeted Thursday.

Coca-Cola last week [said it would suspend operations](#) in Russia. Coke’s business in Russia and Ukraine contributed about 1% to 2% of its operating revenues and income in 2021. The company had an ownership interest of about 21% in [Coca-Cola HBC AG](#), Coke’s bottling and distribution partner in the region, as of Dec. 31.

Restaurant-owner Yum last week said it was temporarily closing its 70 company-owned KFC locations and signing an agreement with its Pizza Hut franchisee to halt business at its 50 locations. It was also suspending all investment and restaurant development in Russia, the company said.

The company is “focused on the safety of our people in the region and will continue to support our teams in Ukraine while evaluating the ways Yum Brands can make a positive impact in the region,” the spokeswoman said.

IBM Chairman and Chief Executive Arvind Krishna wrote in a blog post last week that the company had suspended all business in Russia. “The safety and security of IBMers and their families in all areas impacted by this crisis remains our top priority,” he wrote.

McDonald’s last week said it was temporarily closing its roughly 850 restaurants in the country and would continue paying the 62,000 people it employs in Russia. The company said it couldn’t yet determine when it might reopen the restaurants in Russia and would consider whether any additional steps might be required.

Closing the restaurants is expected to cost the company an estimated \$50 million a month for payroll, leases, supply-chain and other costs, McDonald’s said.

[P&G](#), maker of Pampers diapers and Crest toothpaste, said it would halt spending in Russia on capital investments, advertising and promotions while selling only products that focus on basic health, hygiene and personal care. P&G said that Russia and Ukraine combined account for less than 2% of annual revenue. The company said it employs 2,500 people in Russia.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 WHO, US worry: Ukraine bio-lab samples</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/03/who-us-worry-ukrainian-biological-lab-samples-could-spill-go-to-russians/">https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/03/who-us-worry-ukrainian-biological-lab-samples-could-spill-go-to-russians/</a>
GIST	<p>The World Health Organization has advised officials in Ukraine to destroy any high-risk pathogens housed in public health laboratories in order to prevent their release amid the Russian onslaught, according <a href="#">to a report by Reuters</a>.</p> <p>The agency said that it has worked with Ukrainian officials for years to promote security practices at its laboratories to prevent "accidental or deliberate release of pathogens." As part of that longstanding work, "WHO has strongly recommended to the Ministry of Health in Ukraine and other responsible bodies to destroy high-threat pathogens to prevent any potential spills," the agency said in an email to Reuters. The WHO did not clarify when it made that recommendation or if it was carried out.</p> <p>The news follows <a href="#">Senate testimony on Tuesday by Victoria Nuland</a>, US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, who said that the US is "quite concerned" that Russian troops will seek out Ukraine's biological research laboratories to seize control of any potentially dangerous samples.</p>

"Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned [that] Russian troops, Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of," Nuland said in the hearing held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "So, we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces, should they approach."

#### **"Clear pattern"**

The concerns come as Russia and China have amplified allegations, without evidence, that the US runs laboratories developing biological and chemical weapons in Ukraine. US officials fear the talk is an "obvious ploy" by Russia to try to justify invading Ukraine and possibly a "false flag operation" to use biological or chemical weapons in Ukraine.

"It is classic Russian technique to blame... the other guy [for] what they're planning to do themselves," Nuland said Tuesday.

In [a statement released Wednesday](#), White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki called the claims by Russia and Chinese officials "preposterous" and "disinformation."

While reporting that the US does not possess or develop biological or chemical weapons anywhere, Psaki noted that Russia has a long history of using chemical weapons against foes, including the use of a [Novichok nerve agent](#) against Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny as well as former Russian double-agent Sergei Skripal.

"This is all an obvious ploy by Russia to try to justify its further premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified attack on Ukraine," Psaki said. "Now that Russia has made these false claims and China has seemingly endorsed this propaganda, we should all be on the lookout for Russia to possibly use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine or to create a false flag operation using them. It's a clear pattern."

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Alaska Air pilot shortfall; opens Ore. school</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/alaska-air-launches-new-oregon-academy-to-help-address-pilot-shortage/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/alaska-air-launches-new-oregon-academy-to-help-address-pilot-shortage/</a>
GIST	<p>Alaska Air is prepared to spend millions of dollars to help students attend an Oregon flight school, get their commercial pilot licenses and then get them flying planes for Horizon Air, its regional carrier.</p> <p>The Seattle-based company is partnering with the Hillsboro Aero Academy to launch the flight school program, which will offer training in either Hillsboro or Redmond, Oregon. The airline will offer low-interest flight school loans, cover the cost of a commercial pilot license, then hire new pilots upon completing the program.</p> <p>It's the latest attempt from an airline to shore up its hiring pipeline as carriers across the country try to navigate serious pilot shortages that have forced delays, cancellations and higher plane ticket prices. Other airlines, too, <a href="#">have recently opened their own flight academies</a> to entice candidates who otherwise may not have pursued a career as a pilot.</p> <p>Scott Keyes, the Portland-based founder of the travel discount website Scott's Cheap Flights, said airlines have been unable to keep up with rebounding travel demand due in large part to the pilot shortage. That shortage predated the pandemic, but airlines made things worse when they offered pilots early retirement packages early in the pandemic to cut costs.</p> <p><a href="#">One report</a> from consulting firm Oliver Wyman estimates that the U.S. will be short 12,000 pilots by the end of 2023.</p> <p>"When the airlines reacted to the beginning of the pandemic by really freezing their hiring, not continuing with their ramp-up plans like they had, it seemed like a prudent decision," Keyes said. "But now with travel rebounding much more quickly than anyone expected, airlines have been caught pretty flat-footed."</p>

To fill the gap, major airlines are hiring pilots away from regional carriers. About 80% of pilots hired by major airlines in 2022 are expected to come from regional airlines, said Carlos Zendejas, Horizon Air's vice president of flight operations.

That could squeeze the regional airlines, Keyes said, and lead to more cuts in service to smaller destinations, leaving people in places like Medford and Eugene with fewer flight options.

Zendejas said airlines will need to hire more than 10,000 pilots in 2022, double the number of pilots who were hired in 2019. He said Alaska and Horizon alone anticipate they will need to hire 2,000 more pilots by 2025.

Students with little to no flight experience who enroll in the new Ascend Pilot Academy in either Hillsboro or Redmond will get access to low-interest loans to help them pay for the training program, a \$25,000 stipend to cover the cost of obtaining a commercial pilot license and a conditional job offer from Horizon Air, contingent on completing the program.

The total cost of participating in the Ascend Pilot Academy and obtaining a commercial pilot license will be between \$65,000 to \$80,000, Zendejas said. He said the airlines hope the stipend and low-interest loans will be enough to entice prospective students who previously saw a career as a pilot as cost-prohibitive.

"What we're seeing at Horizon is a lot of pilot attrition, so we're in the process of backfilling for that," Zendejas said. "We have some programs in place, including our Pilot Development Program, which is a partnership with established flight schools and universities, but this academy program will give us another source of pilots, so as we look to the future, more of our pilots can come from our pipelines."

Applications for spots in the new flight academy are now open and the airlines are hoping that the first cohort of prospective pilots will begin training April 1. Zendejas said they hope 250 new pilots will go through the academy each year.

"We're out there marketing the profession, we're giving the blueprints of how to do it, we're providing financial stipends," Zendejas said. "We're out there working to make it accessible to a much broader group."

However, Matt Barton, partner at Flight Path Economics, said that the opening of new flight academies won't prevent the pilot shortage from dragging on for years.

That's because of the time it takes for prospective pilots to obtain the certification necessary to work for commercial airlines. Federal regulations require that airline transport pilots put in 1,500 hours of flight time before receiving their certification, a rule that regional airlines [have pushed to change](#). Barton said that many pilots will work as flight instructors after finishing flight school to obtain those hours. It can take an additional two years for some to complete their hours.

That time lag could make it difficult for the industry to navigate the pilot shortage as demand for travel returns to pre-pandemic levels, Barton said.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Unaccompanied children can seek asylum</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/us-ends-asylum-restrictions-for-children-traveling-alone/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/us-ends-asylum-restrictions-for-children-traveling-alone/</a>
GIST	<p>ATLANTA (AP) — Unaccompanied child migrants trying to enter the United States will no longer be denied a chance to seek asylum under new guidance announced by U.S. health authorities.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in announcing the change late Friday night, said "that expulsion of unaccompanied noncitizen children is not warranted to protect the public health."</p>

	<p>The change was announced shortly before a court order was to take effect that would have allowed the Biden administration to expel unaccompanied children seeking asylum under Title 42 authority, which was introduced in March 2020 to prevent spread of COVID-19. The order remains in place for adults and families traveling with children.</p> <p>Testing and other preventive measures allow children traveling alone to be released to sponsors in the United States, the CDC said. Sponsors are typically family or other close relatives.</p> <p>A federal judge ruled in a lawsuit by the state of Texas that the CDC failed to explain why children traveling alone were exempted from Title 42, and gave the administration a week to appeal. Instead, the CDC lifted the order — but only for unaccompanied children.</p> <p>The Associated Press left a phone message with the office of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and also sent an email. There was no immediate response.</p> <p>Migrants have been expelled more than 1.6 million times under Title 42, named for a 1944 public health law. Biden has kept the order in place but exempted unaccompanied children during his first days in office.</p> <p>Prominent Democrats and advocacy groups have been pressing to end Title 42 for all migrants. “It is not a humane or effective solution to securing our border,” U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, an Illinois Democrat, tweeted on Friday.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Homeless camps cleared; Seattle parade</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/4th-avenue-encampments-cleared-out-time-st-patricks-day-parade/GYWQ5G6XJ5ADXAEEVBQYNJGN7U/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/4th-avenue-encampments-cleared-out-time-st-patricks-day-parade/GYWQ5G6XJ5ADXAEEVBQYNJGN7U/</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Two long, pandemic years have passed since a parade marched through downtown Seattle.</p> <p>But the annual Saint Patrick’s Day parade returned with a wave of green Sunday, just days after two homeless encampments along the route were swept away.</p> <p>Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell says the timing of this latest encampment sweep is just a coincidence. He said that removing the tents was just part of his plan for the city to get people out of the cold.</p> <p>But the sweep along 4th Avenue certainly came at a good time for this long-delayed parade.</p> <p>It seemed that almost everybody in downtown Seattle was a little bit Irish on this overcast Sunday before Saint Patrick’s Day.</p> <p>After all, it has been two long years since anyone has seen this around here, including the Seafair Pirates.</p> <p>“I feel amazing!” exclaimed pirate Lance English. “This is our first parade in two years. We’re dying. We’re ready to get out there and have a blast.”</p> <p>And in that, he has plenty of company.</p> <p>“Oh, this is so much fun to be back in a parade again,” agreed Heather Fleischman, dressed as Star Wars’ Princess Leia. “We’re all so excited. It’s just wonderful to see everybody back together again. Seeing Seattle back out here for a parade again, it’s fantastic.”</p> <p>“I guess, people coming out and celebrating,” said Kelsey Burgess, Kent. “So, I thought that was cool. Yeah.”</p>



	<p>There wasn't much celebrating on the parade route Wednesday. That's when the city made good on its plan three weeks late to remove the homeless encampments across from Seattle City Hall.</p> <p>This was four days before the St. Patrick's Day parade.</p> <p>Harrell said the timing of the encampment sweep had nothing to do with Irish luck. He insists it's all about housing those without a home.</p> <p>"And I need everyone to know we're doing it with compassion," said Harrell. "We're going to find the resources to build housing and create the one Seattle that I only dreamt about as a child. So, here's a good day, and we've got some good weather to celebrate our Irish brothers and sisters. The luck of the Irish is with us today, baby."</p> <p>There were a couple of tents still on 4th Avenue, north of City Hall. But the parade continued right past them.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Average gas price new record: \$4.43/gal.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news-brief-newsletter/average-us-gas-price-rises-22-in-two-weeks-to-record-443">https://komonews.com/news-brief-newsletter/average-us-gas-price-rises-22-in-two-weeks-to-record-443</a>
GIST	<p>CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP) — The average U.S. price of <a href="#">regular-grade gasoline</a> shot up a whopping 79 cents over the past two weeks to a record-setting \$4.43 per gallon (3.8 liters).</p> <p>Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg of the Lundberg Survey said Sunday the new price exceeds by 32 cents the prior all-time high of \$4.11 set in July 2008.</p> <p>The price at the pump is \$1.54 higher than it was a year ago.</p> <p>Lundberg said gas prices are likely to remain high in the short term as crude oil costs soar amid global supply concerns following Russia's <a href="#">invasion of Ukraine</a>.</p> <p>Nationwide, the highest average price for regular-grade gas is in the San Francisco Bay Area, at \$5.79 per gallon. The lowest average is in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at \$3.80 per gallon.</p> <p>According to the survey, the average price of diesel also spiked, up \$1.18 over two weeks, to \$5.20 a gallon. Diesel costs \$2.11 more than it did one year ago.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Chechen strongman: joined Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/13/world/ukraine-russia-war#chechen-strongman-claims-he-has-joined-russian-troops-outside-kyiv">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/13/world/ukraine-russia-war#chechen-strongman-claims-he-has-joined-russian-troops-outside-kyiv</a>
GIST	<p>As Kyiv girded for an expected Russian onslaught, Ramzan A. Kadyrov, the Chechen strongman, announced that he had arrived at the doorsteps of the Ukrainian capital, posting a video that appeared to show Chechen troops briefing him after a successful attack.</p> <p>He mocked Ukrainian forces, saying they had little idea where he was. He said the video was shot in Hostomel, where Russian troops have been attacking an airport, and he warned he would join other Russian forces preparing to enter Kyiv.</p> <p>Mr. Kadyrov's claim could not immediately be verified. But his background is well known. A close ally of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, Mr. Kadyrov has brutally stamped out dissent in Chechnya, where security services torture detainees and carry out disappearances and extrajudicial killings. His government has targeted journalists and carried out a brutal pogrom against gays in the turbulent, predominantly Muslim region in the North Caucasus.</p>

In Chechnya, Russia killed thousands of civilians and bombed cities to rubble in two wars as it crushed rebellions in the 1990s and early 2000s. Mr. Kadyrov's father, who was installed as the Chechen leader by Mr. Putin, was assassinated in 2004 after seven months in office. His son was installed as Chechnya's leader in 2007 at the age of 30.

Before the Russian invasion last month, Chechen troops were shown on social media discussing their plans to join the fight, stirring fears that they may employ similar scorched-earth tactics against civilian populations in Ukraine.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 US: Russia asked China military equipment</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/us/politics/russia-china-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/us/politics/russia-china-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Russia asked China to give it military equipment and support for the <a href="#">war in Ukraine</a> after President Vladimir V. Putin began a full-scale invasion last month, according to U.S. officials.</p> <p>Russia has also asked China for additional economic assistance, to help counteract the battering its economy has taken from <a href="#">broad sanctions</a> imposed by the United States and European and Asian nations, according to an official.</p> <p>American officials, determined to keep secret their means of collecting the intelligence on Russia's requests, declined to describe further the kind of military weapons or aid that Moscow is seeking. The officials also declined to discuss any reaction by China to the requests.</p> <p>President Xi Jinping of China has <a href="#">strengthened a partnership</a> with Mr. Putin and has stood by him as Russia has stepped up its military campaign in Ukraine, destroying cities and killing hundreds or thousands of civilians. American officials are watching China closely to see whether it will act on any requests of aid from Russia. Jake Sullivan, the White House national security adviser, is scheduled to meet on Monday in Rome with Yang Jiechi, a member of the Chinese Communist Party's elite Politburo and director of the party's Central Foreign Affairs Commission.</p> <p>Mr. Sullivan intends to warn Mr. Yang about any future Chinese efforts to bolster Russia in its war or undercut Ukraine, the United States and their partners.</p> <p>"We are communicating directly, privately to Beijing that there will absolutely be consequences for large-scale sanctions evasion efforts or support to Russia to backfill them," Mr. Sullivan said on CNN on Sunday.</p> <p>"We will not allow that to go forward and allow there to be a lifeline to Russia from these economic sanctions from any country, anywhere in the world," he said.</p> <p>Mr. Sullivan did not make any explicit mention of potential military support from China, but other U.S. officials spoke about the request from Russia on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of diplomatic and intelligence matters.</p> <p>Liu Pengyu, a spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, said he had never heard of the request from Russia. "The current situation in Ukraine is indeed disconcerting," he said, adding that Beijing wants to see a peaceful settlement. "The high priority now is to prevent the tense situation from escalating or even getting out of control."</p> <p>The Biden administration is seeking to lay out for China the consequences of its alignment with Russia and penalties it will incur if it continues or increases its support. Some U.S. officials argue it might be possible to dissuade Beijing from ramping up its assistance to Moscow. Chinese leaders may be content to offer rhetorical support for Moscow and may not want to further enmesh themselves with Mr. Putin by providing military support for the war, those U.S. officials say.</p>

Mr. Sullivan said China “was aware before the invasion took place that Vladimir Putin was planning something,” but added that the Chinese might not have known the full extent of the Russian leader’s plans. “It’s very possible that Putin lied to them, the same way he lied to Europeans and others,” he said.

Mr. Xi has met with Mr. Putin 38 times as national leaders, more than with any other head of state, and the two [share a drive](#) to weaken American power.

Traditionally, China has bought military equipment from Russia rather than the other way around. Russia has [increased its sales](#) of weaponry to China in recent years. But China has advanced missile and drone capabilities that Russia could use in its Ukraine campaign.

Although Russia on Sunday launched a missile barrage on a military training ground in western Ukraine that killed at least 35 people, there has been some evidence that Russian missile supplies have been running low, according to independent analysts.

Last week, the White House criticized China for [helping spread Kremlin disinformation](#) about the United States and Ukraine. In recent days, Chinese diplomats, state media organizations and government agencies have used a range of platforms and official social media accounts to amplify a conspiracy theory that says the Pentagon has been financing biological and chemical weapons labs in Ukraine. [Right-wing political figures](#) in the United States have also promoted the theory.

On Friday, Russia called a United Nations Security Council meeting to present its claims about the labs, and the Chinese ambassador to the U.N., Zhang Jun, supported his Russian counterpart.

“Now that Russia has made these false claims, and China has seemingly endorsed this propaganda, we should all be on the lookout for Russia to possibly use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine, or to create a false flag operation using them,” Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, wrote on Twitter last Wednesday.

China is also involved in the Iran nuclear negotiations, which have stalled because of new demands from Russia on relief from the sanctions imposed by Western nations in response to the Ukraine war.

American officials are trying to determine to what degree China would support Russia’s position in those talks. Before Russia raised the requests, officials from the nations involved had been close to clinching a return to a version of the Obama-era nuclear limits agreement from which President Donald J. Trump withdrew. Mr. Sullivan might bring up Iran with Mr. Yang on Monday.

Current and former U.S. officials say the Rome meeting is important, given the lives at stake in the Ukraine war and the possibility of Russia and China presenting a geopolitical united front against the United States and its allies in the years ahead.

“This meeting is critical and possibly a defining moment in the relationship,” said Evan Medeiros, a Georgetown University professor who was a senior Asia director on the National Security Council during the Obama administration.

“I think what the U.S. is probably going to do is lay out the costs and consequences of China’s complicity and possible enabling of Russia’s invasion,” he said. “I don’t think anyone in the administration has illusions that the U.S. can pull China away from Russia.”

Some U.S. officials are looking for ways to compel Mr. Xi to distance himself from Mr. Putin on the war. Others see Mr. Xi as a lost cause and prefer to treat China and Russia as committed partners, hoping that might galvanize policies and coordination among Asian and European allies to contain them both.

Chinese officials have consistently voiced sympathy for Russia during the Ukraine war by reiterating Mr. Putin’s criticism of NATO and blaming the United States for starting the conflict. They have refrained

from any mention of a Russian “war” or “invasion,” even as they express general concern for the humanitarian crisis.

They mention support for “sovereignty and territorial integrity,” a common catchphrase in Chinese diplomacy, but do not say explicitly which nation’s sovereignty they support — meaning the phrase could be interpreted as backing for Ukraine or an endorsement of Mr. Putin’s claims to restoring the territory of imperial Russia.

China and Russia issued a 5,000-word statement on Feb. 4 saying their partnership had “no limits” when Mr. Putin met with Mr. Xi before the opening ceremony of the [Winter Olympics](#) in Beijing. Around that time, senior Chinese officials [asked senior Russian officials](#) not to [invade Ukraine](#) before the end of the Games, according to U.S. and European officials who cite a Western intelligence report.

Starting last November, American officials [quietly held talks](#) with Chinese officials, including the ambassador in Washington and the foreign minister, to discuss intelligence showing Mr. Putin’s troop buildup to persuade the Chinese to tell the Russians not to launch a war, U.S. officials said. The Chinese officials rebuffed the Americans at every meeting and expressed skepticism that Mr. Putin intended to invade Ukraine, the U.S. officials said.

William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, said on Thursday in a Senate hearing that he believed Mr. Xi was “unsettled” by the Ukraine war.

Last Tuesday, [Mr. Xi repeated](#) China’s standard talking points on the war in a video call with the leaders of France and Germany. He also said that all nations should show “maximum restraint” and that China was “deeply grieved by the outbreak of war again on the European continent,” according to a Chinese readout. He did not say Russia had started the fighting.

U.S. and European officials say large Chinese companies will most likely refrain from openly violating sanctions on Russia for fear of jeopardizing their global commerce. On Thursday, some Russian news articles and commentary questioned China’s commitment to Russia after news agencies reported that China [was refusing to send aircraft parts](#) to the country.

Russia, as U.S. officials often remind the public, has relatively few friends or allies. And officials have said Russia’s outreach to its partners is a sign of the difficulties it is encountering in trying to subdue Ukraine.

As the United States and Europe have increased pressure and sanctions, Moscow has sought more aid. In the buildup to war, Russia got assistance from Belarus, using its territory to launch part of the invasion. Minsk has also tried to help Moscow evade sanctions. Those actions prompted the European Union to impose sanctions on Belarus. The penalties limit money flowing into Belarus from Europe and block some Belarusian banks from using the [SWIFT financial messaging system](#).

Michael Carpenter, the U.S. ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, accused Belarus of being a “co-aggressor” and having “stabbed your neighbor in the back,” referring to Ukraine.

President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko of Belarus has said his military will not join in the war. But Russia has launched missiles from Belarus and evacuated some injured Russian soldiers to hospitals in that country.

President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, who owes his government’s survival to Russian intervention in the Syrian civil war, also declared support for Moscow’s invasion. Russia has tried to recruit Syrian fighters to join the Ukraine war, according to the Pentagon.

	<p>While there are no details of how many recruits Moscow has enlisted or if they have arrived in Ukraine, American officials said Russia's efforts were an indicator of the strategic and tactical problems that have plagued its commanders.</p> <p>Before the start of the war, European officials said, Russian military contractors with experience fighting in Syria and Libya secretly entered eastern Ukraine to help lay the groundwork for the invasion.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Pfizer CEO: 4<sup>th</sup> vaccine dose needed</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/13/health/pfizer-vaccine-4th-dose/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/13/health/pfizer-vaccine-4th-dose/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)To help fend off <a href="#">another wave</a> of Covid-19, people will need a fourth dose of vaccine, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla told CBS on Sunday.</p> <p>"Many variants are coming, and Omicron was the first one that was able to evade -- in a skillful way -- the immune protection that we're giving," Bourla told CBS' "Face the Nation."</p> <p>"The protection we are getting from the third (dose) it is good enough -- actually quite good for hospitalizations and deaths," Bourla said.</p> <p>But protection after three doses is "not that good against infections" and "doesn't last very long" when faced with a variant like Omicron.</p> <p>"It is necessary, a fourth (dose) for right now," Bourla told CBS.</p> <p>Currently, <a href="#">anyone ages 12 and up</a> who got a second dose of the Pfizer vaccine at least five months ago can get a third dose.</p> <p>Anyone ages 18 and up who got the two-dose Moderna vaccine should get a booster shot six months after the second dose, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>And anyone who got the single-dose Johnson &amp; Johnson vaccine should get a booster shot after two months, the CDC said.</p> <p>Some <a href="#">moderately or severely immunocompromised people</a> who have had three doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna Covid-19 vaccines <a href="#">can already get a fourth dose of vaccine</a>, according to the CDC.</p> <p>But it's not clear if or when the US Food and Drug Administration might authorize a fourth dose of Covid-19 vaccine for healthy teens and adults.</p> <p>"We are just submitting those data to the FDA, and then we'll see what the experts also would say outside Pfizer," Bourla told CBS.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/14 China battles multiple Covid outbreaks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/china-battles-multiple-outbreaks-driven-stealth-omicron-83430720">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/china-battles-multiple-outbreaks-driven-stealth-omicron-83430720</a>
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan -- Chinese authorities reported 1,337 locally transmitted cases of COVID-19 across dozens of mainland cities Monday as the fast-spreading variant commonly known as "stealth omicron" fuels <a href="#">China's</a> biggest outbreak in two years.</p> <p>The vast majority of the new cases were in far northeastern Jilin province with 895. Shenzhen reported 75 new cases as residents began the first of three rounds of mass testing. Officials on Sunday locked down the city, which has 17.5 million people and is a major tech and finance hub that neighbors Hong Kong.</p> <p>The surge on the Chinese mainland is infecting people in cities ranging from Shenzhen to Qingdao on the coast, to Xingtai in the north and the numbers have crept steadily higher since early March. While the</p>

numbers are small relative to numbers reported in Europe or in the U.S., or even the city of Hong Kong, which had reported 32,000 cases Sunday, they are the highest since the first big outbreak of COVID-19 in the central city of Wuhan in early 2020.

China has seen very few infections since its strict Wuhan lockdown as the government held fast to its zero-tolerance strategy, which is focused on stopping transmission of the [coronavirus](#) as fast as possible, by relying on strict lockdowns and mandatory quarantines for anyone who has come into contact with a positive case.

The government has indicated it will continue to stick to its strict strategy of stopping transmission for the time being.

On Monday, Zhang Wenhong, a prominent infectious disease expert at a hospital affiliated with Shanghai's Fudan University noted in an essay for China's business outlet Caixin, that the numbers for the mainland were still in the beginning stages of an "exponential rise." Shanghai confirmed 41 new cases on Monday.

Much of the current outbreak is being driven the variant commonly known as "stealth omicron," or the B.A.2 lineage of the omicron variant, Zhang noted. Early research suggests it spreads faster than the original omicron, which itself spread faster than the original virus and other variants.

"But if our country opens up quickly now, it will cause a large number of infections in people in a short period of time," Zhang wrote on Monday. "No matter how low the death rate is, it will still cause a run on medical resources and a short term shock to social life, causing irreparable harm to families and society."

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Kyiv police: Russia troops kill US journalist</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/13/media/russia-ukraine-brent-renaud-death-intl/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/13/media/russia-ukraine-brent-renaud-death-intl/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>Kyiv, Ukraine (CNN)Award-winning American journalist Brent Renaud was killed by Russian forces in the Ukrainian city of Irpin, police in Kyiv said in social media posts on Sunday. Another American journalist was reported wounded.</p> <p>In a tweet, Kyiv region police identified the dead man as Renaud, who was 50. Police posted a photo of his body and his American passport as evidence, as well as a photo of an outdated New York Times press badge with Renaud's name.</p> <p>Head of the Kyiv region police Andriy Nebitov said in a Facebook post that Russian forces shot Renaud, adding that "the occupants cynically kill even journalists of international media, who've been trying to tell the truth about atrocities of Russian military in Ukraine."</p> <p>"Of course, journalism carries risks, but the US citizen Brent Renaud paid with his life for an attempt to shed light on how underhand, cruel, and merciless the aggressor is," Nebitov added.</p> <p>Nebitov said that two more journalists were injured, adding that "the injured have been already saved and moved to a hospital in the capital. What condition they are in is unknown at the moment."</p> <p>One of the wounded journalists is believed to be Colombian-American photographer Juan Arredondo, who is now in hospital, according to social media video and international media reports.</p> <p>Social media footage has emerged of a journalist identified as Juan Arredondo at Okhmatdyt hospital in Kyiv, in which he describes being shot at by Russian forces while driving through a checkpoint in Irpin on the way to film refugees leaving the city.</p>



"There was two of us, my friend Brent Renaud. And he's been shot and left behind," Arredondo said in the video, adding that Renaud was shot in the neck. "We got split and I got pulled into the [points to stretcher] ...an ambulance, I don't know."

Arredondo, a filmmaker and visual journalist who is also an adjunct professor at Columbia Journalism School, posted photos from Zhytomyr, Ukraine on Saturday, noting in an Instagram post that he is "#onassignment."

The Dean of Columbia Journalism School, Steve Coll, told CNN: "We don't have any independent information about his injuries at this time but are working now to learn more and to see if we can help."

Arredondo is a 2019 Harvard Nieman fellow. He has previously had his photography featured in The New York Times, National Geographic, The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, ESPN, Vanity Fair, and other media outlets, according to his personal website bio.

An adviser to Ukraine's interior minister, Anton Gerashchenko, said in a statement on Telegram that Renaud "paid with his life for attempting to expose the insidiousness, cruelty and ruthlessness of the aggressor."

CNN has been unable to verify which media outlet the American journalists were working for in Ukraine. Police did not name the injured journalist.

### **Tributes to Renaud**

The New York Times said in a statement on Sunday, "We are deeply saddened to hear of Brent Renaud's death. Brent was a talented filmmaker who had contributed to The New York Times over the years.

Though he had contributed to The Times in the past (most recently in 2015), he was not on assignment for any desk at The Times in Ukraine. Early reports that he worked for Times circulated because he was wearing a Times press badge that had been issued for an assignment many years ago."

The northern Ukrainian city of Irpin, just outside Kyiv, has been the site of substantial Russian shelling in recent days and has seen extensive destruction, according to the Kyiv regional government on Friday.

Renaud was a Peabody Award-winning documentary filmmaker, producer, and journalist, who lived and worked in New York City and Little Rock, Arkansas, according to his biography on the [Renaud Brothers website](#).

With his brother Craig, Renaud spent years "telling humanistic verite stories from the World's hot spots," including projects in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, Egypt, and Libya, according to his website bio.

The director of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard said on Sunday that the foundation was "heartsick" over the death of the journalist, who was a 2019 Harvard Nieman Fellow.

"Our Nieman Fellow Brent Renaud was gifted and kind, and his work was infused with humanity. He was killed today outside Kiev, and the world and journalism are lesser for it. We are heartsick," said foundation curator Ann Marie Lipinski in a [tweet](#).

The Committee to Protect Journalists on Sunday condemned the killing and called for the killers to be brought to justice.

The New York-based organization said in a [statement](#), "U.S. reporter Brent Renaud was shot and killed, and another journalist was injured on Sunday in the city of Irpin, outside of Kyiv, according to a Ukrainian police official and news reports.

A post on the Renaud Brothers Facebook [page](#), dated March 8, urged readers to follow their coverage of the war Ukraine.

	<p>Christof Putzel, a friend and colleague of Renaud, told CNN his passing was a "devastating" loss.</p> <p>"I woke up this morning to the news that Brent, long-time best friend, incredible colleague, the best war journalist I think ever existed, finding out about his passing," Putzel told Brian Stelter on CNN's Reliable Sources on Sunday.</p> <p>"Brent had this ability to go anywhere, get any story, listen and communicate what was happening to people that others wouldn't otherwise see it. And it is a devastating loss to journalism today," he added. Putzel said Renaud was working on a documentary about refugees around the world when the crisis in Ukraine hit. He said that "Brent was on the plane the next day" and covered the plight of refugees from Kyiv into Poland.</p> <p>Several years ago, the pair won a duPont award for a story they worked on about guns being smuggled into Mexico from the US.</p> <p>"What I said when we accepted our award was, the only thing bigger than Brent's balls are his heart. And I stand by that. That's what kind of journalist he was," said Putzel.</p> <p>Renaud had a unique ability to make people trust him as he told their stories in places like Iraq and other war zones, he added.</p> <p>"You could sit down and spend a week watching all of Brent's stories over the years back-to-back and just be flabbergasted. The career that he had, his ability to reach people, his ability to capture the humanity behind people's suffering is something I have never seen before, and I was just honored to work with him as long as I did," Putzel said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/12 Russia: sanctions could cause ISS to crash</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/russia-warns-sanctions-could-cause-international-space-station-iss-to-crash-news-agency-afp-quoting-official-2818686">https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/russia-warns-sanctions-could-cause-international-space-station-iss-to-crash-news-agency-afp-quoting-official-2818686</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Moscow: Western sanctions against Russia could cause the International Space Station to crash, the head of Russian space agency Roscosmos warned Saturday, calling for the punitive measures to be lifted.</p> <p>According to Dmitry Rogozin, the sanctions, some of which predate Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, could disrupt the operation of Russian spacecraft servicing the ISS.</p> <p>As a result, the Russian segment of the station -- which helps correct its orbit -- could be affected, causing the 500-tonne structure to "fall down into the sea or onto land", the Roscosmos chief wrote on Telegram.</p> <p>"The Russian segment ensures that the station's orbit is corrected (on average 11 times a year), including to avoid space debris," said Rogozin, who regularly expresses his support for the Russian army in Ukraine on social networks.</p> <p>Publishing a map of the locations where the ISS could possibly come down, he pointed out that it was unlikely to be in Russia.</p> <p>"But the populations of other countries, especially those led by the 'dogs of war', should think about the price of the sanctions against Roscosmos", he continued, describing the countries who imposed sanctions as "crazy".</p> <p>Rogozin similarly raised the threat of the space station falling to earth last month while blasting Western sanctions on Twitter.</p> <p>On March 1, NASA said it was trying to find a solution to keep the ISS in orbit without Russia's help.</p>

	<p>Crews and supplies are transported to the Russian segment by Soyuz spacecraft.</p> <p>But Rogozin said the launcher used for take-off had been "under US sanctions since 2021 and under EU and Canadian sanctions since 2022".</p> <p>Roscosmos said it had appealed to NASA, the Canadian Space Agency and the European Space Agency, "demanding the lifting of illegal sanctions against our companies".</p> <p>Space is one of the last remaining areas where the United States and Russia continue to cooperate.</p> <p>At the beginning of March, Roscosmos announced its intention to prioritise the construction of military satellites as Russia finds itself increasingly isolated as a result of the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Rogozin also announced that Moscow would no longer supply the engines for the US Atlas and Antares rockets.</p> <p>"Let them soar into space on their broomsticks," he wrote.</p> <p>On March 30, US astronaut, Mark Vande Hei, and two cosmonauts, Anton Shkaplerov and Pyotr Dubrov, are scheduled to return to Earth from the ISS onboard a Soyuz spacecraft.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/11 Ominous signs: recession risks piling up</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://finance.yahoo.com/news/recession-risks-piling-investors-ready-073042241.html">https://finance.yahoo.com/news/recession-risks-piling-investors-ready-073042241.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>(Bloomberg) -- Even after one of the worst starts to an equity trading year in history, the market upheaval might just be getting started.</p> <p>Ominous signs are piling up that more turmoil is still coming, as key indicators point toward a potential recession. That could deepen the market rout triggered by the Federal Reserve leading a hawkish shift among central banks and war in Ukraine.</p> <p>The U.S. Treasury yield curve has collapsed to near inversion -- a situation when short-term rates exceed those with longer tenors, which has often preceded a downturn. In Europe, energy costs have climbed to unprecedented levels, as sanctions against Russia exacerbate a global commodity crunch.</p> <p>"Over time, the three biggest factors that tend to drive the U.S. economy into a recession are an inverted yield curve, some kind of commodity price shock or Fed tightening," said Ed Clissold, chief U.S. strategist at Ned Davis Research. "Right now, there appears to be potential for all three to happen at the same time."</p> <p>Food prices are already past levels that contributed to uprisings in the past, and the outbreak of a war between Russia and Ukraine -- which combined account for 28% of global wheat exports and 16% of corn, according to UBS Global Wealth Management -- only adds to risks.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Fed is unlikely to intervene to prevent sell-offs, according to George Saravelos, Deutsche Bank's global head of currency research. That's because the root cause of the current spike in inflation is a supply shock, rendering the playbook used to fight downturns for the past 30 years all but useless.</p> <p>The probability of a U.S. recession in the next year may be as high as 35%, according to economists at Goldman Sachs Group Inc., who cut the bank's growth forecasts due to the soaring oil prices and the fallout from the war in Ukraine. Bank of America Corp. said the risk of an economic downturn is low for now, but higher next year.</p> <p>With a sharp and widespread economic slowdown looming over the horizon, here's a guide on how to prepare based on conversations and notes by fund managers and strategists.</p>

## Europe Exodus

While the year started with bullish bets on European stocks, that's ancient history now. Record inflation, a surprisingly hawkish pivot by the European Central Bank and Vladimir Putin's attack on Ukraine have changed everything, and a mass exodus from the region's stocks is in full swing.

Strategists across asset classes see the Old Continent as the most exposed to risks stemming from the war, not least due its geographical proximity and its energy dependence on Russia.

"For euro zone, there is a high probability of recession if the situation doesn't normalize quickly," said Christophe Barraud, chief economist at Market Securities LLP in Paris. The risks include the confidence shock from the war, the hit to household consumption from higher food and energy prices, and the amplified supply chain disruptions caused by the conflict, he said.

Even enthusiastic bulls, like UBS Global Wealth Management, have downgraded euro-area equities. Amundi SA, Europe's largest asset manager, said Friday that a temporary economic and earnings recession on the continent is now possible.

The silver lining is that much of the bad news for Europe may now already be accounted for, revealing pockets of opportunity. Bank of America Corp. strategists lifted the region's cyclical versus defensive stocks, as well as carmakers.

"The recent underperformance leaves them more realistically priced," they said.

## Commodity Havens

Miners and energy are the only sectors that have weathered the rout in European equities so far, and that's likely to continue -- unless price rises destroy demand in the process.

"The energy sector in equities is one of the areas that provides shelter," Nannette Hechler-Fayd'herbe, global head for economics and research at Credit Suisse Group AG told Bloomberg TV. "In the best case, growth is picking up and energy is supported by that. In the worst case, it is prices that continue to increase and energy sector continues to be supported as well."

In the emerging landscape, the U.K. has been touted as a potential haven because of an abundance of commodity stocks in the FTSE 100 index. While MSCI's benchmark of global stocks has slumped 11% this year, Britain's large-cap gauge has lost a mere 3%.

Energy and materials firms, along with the traditionally-defensive sectors of health care and utilities, account for a combined 58% of the FTSE 100 -- index members like Shell Plc and Glencore Plc have risen amid fears of a supply squeeze. The figure drops to about 31% for MSCI's world benchmark.

Opaque industries such as agricultural chemicals are also doing well, and the ongoing tightness in fertilizer markets due to the war in Ukraine could bode well for companies like Yara International ASA, OCI NV, Mosaic Co. and Nutrien Ltd.

Food staples and retailing in the U.S. have also historically outperformed during stagflationary periods, UBS strategists Nicolas Le Roux and Bhanu Baweja wrote in a note.

## Booze and Chocolate

To be sure, not all yield-curve inversions, tightening cycles and commodity spikes lead to economic contractions. But the risks are there, and investors seeking to take cover should act -- though it may already be too late.

	<p>The U.S. market anticipates the start of recessions by an average of seven months and bottoms by an average of five months before the end of a recession, according to CFRA data going back to World War II.</p> <p>By the time the National Bureau of Economic Research tells us we're in a recession, "it's the time to buy," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist for CFRA.</p> <p>And if you are unsure what to buy amid the market uncertainty, Greenmantle's Dimitris Valatsas recommends a house.</p> <p>"The historical evidence from the last global inflationary period during the 1970s is clear," he said. "In real terms, across major economies, housing outperforms every other major asset class, including equities."</p> <p>But to keep a foothold in equity markets, it's worth keeping an eye on purveyors of creature comforts and what people can't do without such as must-have technologies, like Microsoft Corp.</p> <p>When crisis hits, "consumers typically go for little pleasures," said Edmund Shing, chief investment officer at BNP Paribas Wealth Management. "Buying new cars or smartphones suffer, while booze and chocolates tend to benefit."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Croatia officials: crashed drone had bomb</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/world/official-drone-that-crashed-in-croatia-carried-a-bomb/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/world/official-drone-that-crashed-in-croatia-carried-a-bomb/</a>
GIST	<p>ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) — A military drone that apparently flew all the way from the Ukrainian war zone over three European NATO-member states before crashing in an urban zone of the Croatian capital was armed with an explosive device, Croatia's defense minister said Sunday.</p> <p>The Soviet-made aircraft crossed Romania and Hungary before entering Croatia, slamming into a field near a student dormitory late Thursday. About 40 parked cars were damaged in the large explosion, but no one was injured.</p> <p>"Traces of explosives and clues suggesting that this was not a reconnaissance aircraft were found. We found parts of an air bomb," Croatian Defense Minister Mario Banozic said at the crash site.</p> <p>He said that this further raises a question about whether the drone belonged to Russia or Ukraine.</p> <p>"There are elements that indicated it could have come from both," he said.</p> <p>Air crash investigators have pulled most of the drone's remaining parts from a large crater it created on impact, including a partly damaged black box that should reveal the drone's flight path.</p> <p>Croatian officials have criticized NATO for what they called a slow reaction to a very serious incident and called into question the readiness of the military alliance's member states to respond to a possible attack.</p> <p>NATO said the alliance's integrated air and missile defense had tracked the object's flight path. But Croatian officials said the country's authorities weren't informed and that NATO reacted only after questions were posed by journalists.</p> <p>"If this situation had been detected and resolved in time in neighboring countries, we would not be here today," Banozic said.</p> <p>"We will seek answers to what happened. The defense ministers of Romania and Hungary said that day they were evaluating what happened. We are waiting for an answer," he said.</p>

	Croatian investigators identified the unmanned aircraft that crashed in Zagreb as a Soviet-era Tu-141 that was used for reconnaissance missions in both countries in the 1980s.
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Saudis fight to turn tide Yemen civil war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudis-fight-to-turn-the-tide-in-yemens-civil-war-11647180197?mod=hp_listb_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudis-fight-to-turn-the-tide-in-yemens-civil-war-11647180197?mod=hp_listb_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>MARIB, Yemen—Enemy bullets ripped overhead. A barefoot Yemeni soldier who calls himself Fouad the Brave grabbed a rifle and returned fire from behind a sand berm, taking aim at Iran-backed Houthi fighters a few hundred yards away.</p> <p>The small desert outpost manned by Fouad and a handful of sunburned soldiers is on <a href="#">the front line of Yemen's civil war</a>, which pits government forces backed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against Houthi rebels allied with Tehran.</p> <p>Marib is one of the last major sanctuaries the Yemeni government has in the north of the country. “Either we win,” Fouad said, “or we die trying.”</p> <p>Saudi Arabia and its allies, with their local proxies trying to hold their ground and with Washington having scaled back support for the conflict, are <a href="#">struggling to turn the tide</a> here, stepping up <a href="#">aerial bombing and missile strikes</a>.</p> <p>The Saudi-led coalition carried out roughly 700 airstrikes in February, according to the Yemen Data Project, a nonprofit that tracks the war in Yemen. That would make it the most intense period of bombing since 2018.</p> <p>In the past four months, more than 1,500 Yemeni civilians have been killed or wounded, up from 823 in the previous four months, according to the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project, which collects information on the war for the United Nations. Saudi-coalition airstrikes were responsible for the vast majority of the casualties, the group said.</p> <p>A central aim of the airstrikes, Saudi officials say: push the Houthis back and hurt them enough that they feel compelled to negotiate an end to the war. Peace talks have been stalled for months as the Houthis try to capture Marib.</p> <p>The U.S. and U.N. <a href="#">have urged Saudi Arabia</a> to ease up on airstrikes. But officials in Riyadh and Yemen say they intend to hit the Houthis even harder.</p> <p>“We have to continue the fight,” said Sheikh Sultan al-Aradah, the governor of Marib. His home was destroyed in September by two Houthi ballistic missiles. “This is the right track, but it’s just the beginning.”</p> <p>The Houthis have responded to the Saudi and U.A.E. moves by launching <a href="#">missile and drone strikes targeting the Gulf nations</a>. They have also fired more missiles at Marib, including a barrage of seven that crashed into the city on Feb. 19 while a Wall Street Journal reporter and photographer were visiting.</p> <p>The intensifying violence comes seven years after Saudi Arabia and a small group of allied nations launched a bombing campaign that Riyadh said would take only a few weeks to rout Houthi fighters who had taken Yemen’s capital, San’a, in a conflict that grew out of the Arab Spring.</p> <p>Instead, the war has dragged on and created one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with the U.N. estimating that more than 377,000 people have died as a result of the war, 70% of them children.</p>



The war in Yemen also gave Iran an opening to transform outgunned Houthi fighters into one of Tehran's most adept militant allies. The group can now fly advanced drones and fire long-range missiles [capable of hitting the capitals](#) of Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. more than 800 miles away.

While Saudi-backed fighters say they have made some gains in recent weeks, the Houthis still control the country's capital and much of the nation's northern highlands. The fractured Yemeni government and its allies retain fragile control in the south and east.

If the Houthis take Marib, it would give them effective control of the entire north of Yemen, along with oil money they can use to keep financing their fight.

"If they control Marib, we will lose the war and lose security and stability in the region," said one top Saudi official.

Officials in Marib, once a prosperous oil-rich outpost, said more than two million people have sought refuge here—nearly 60% of the 3.5 million Yemenis displaced by the war. Most are housed in about 150 spartan camps surrounding Marib.

Arafat Al Subhari fled San'a with his wife and five children in 2017 after militants fatally shot his father in the head, he said. They have moved four times to different camps. They fled one as the Houthi forces closed in and another because it had been hit by Houthi missiles.

Mr. Subhari is so tired of running that he isn't going to move again, even though he and his family live in a camp with no running water or electricity. "It would be nice to have a safe place to live," he said.

In the Marib General Hospital, doctors treat casualties from the fighting. Motaidei Ali Mansour, a 9-year-old boy, was in danger of losing his leg after he was hit with shrapnel from a Houthi missile, according to his father, Amin Ali Mansour.

"The Houthis are like a cancer, and we need to get rid of it," Mr. Mansour said.

In the next room, three wounded Yemeni soldiers said the war wouldn't end until world leaders do more to prevent Iran from helping the Houthis.

Osama Adel, a 27-year-old Yemeni soldier, dropped out of college in 2015 to fight and has been injured four times in seven years.

"My weapon was a pen, but now it's a gun," Mr. Adel said from his hospital bed in between taking gasps of oxygen from his mask after being shot by Houthis. "They forced me to fight."

The U.S. and Saudi Arabia have accused Iran of providing the Houthis with weapons, advisers and support they have used to build and launch an expanding array of drones and missiles targeting Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and ships off the Yemeni coast.

Iran is one of the few countries to have diplomatic relations with the Houthis. Tehran has denied that it provides them with weapons.

The Houthis are focusing on Marib in an effort to deliver a debilitating blow to the Saudi-backed government. Saudi officials say the Houthis are refusing to negotiate while they try to seize Marib.

Nasr al-Din Amir, the Houthi deputy minister of information, said the militants still held the advantage. "We are the ones who are making advances on the ground," he said. "They are trying to tell the world that they have shifted the balance of power in favor of them, but this is a complete and total lie."

Lt. Gen. Mohammed Ali Al-Maqdashi, Yemen's defense minister, runs the fight for Marib from a war room burrowed deep into the side of a mountain—an effort to avoid Houthi missile strikes. He expressed no hope that peace talks would bring an end to the war.

“The Houthis will not accept peace,” he said. “We are not fighting the Houthis. We are fighting Iran.”

Saudi Arabia keeps a low profile on the front lines. To reduce risks of being targeted, Saudi military advisers in Yemen ditch their uniforms for the traditional ankle-length robes commonly worn here.

At the far edges of Marib, Yemeni fighters are exhausted. The front lines in some places are little more than zigzagging dirt berms fortified by canvas rice bags filled with sand. Most of the fighting happens at night, when scorching temperatures drop.

On a recent morning, a Saudi coalition jet fighter flew high overhead. A Houthi drone crashed into some Yemeni military vehicles, setting a couple of them ablaze. Yemeni fighters sought shelter from the sun anywhere they could—in a makeshift platform set in the branches of an acacia tree, underneath the truck carrying a missile launcher, behind a downed tree with a thin children's Winnie the Pooh tarp flapping in the light breeze.

As Houthi bullets zipped overhead, one barefoot fighter sat impassively with his back to the front line as Yemeni officers rushed to a waiting pickup truck and sped away.

“God protect us,” the soldier said as Yemeni fighters along the dirt berm tried to hold the line.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Russia invasion threatens wheat supply</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-ukraine-war-threatens-wheat-supply-jolts-prices-11647115099?mod=hp_lead_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-ukraine-war-threatens-wheat-supply-jolts-prices-11647115099?mod=hp_lead_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>Russia's <a href="#">invasion of Ukraine</a> threatens a big portion of the world's wheat supply and has sent prices on a dizzying ride to new highs as well as the sharpest weekly drop in years.</p> <p>Wheat stockpiles were already running low and prices were the <a href="#">highest in years</a> thanks to two years of poor growing weather when Russia's attack <a href="#">jammed up Black Sea trading</a> and endangered nearly a third of the world's exports. The invasion prompted fears of food shortages in countries fed with imported grain and pushed prices to new highs.</p> <p>Milling wheat in Paris and the most-traded U.S. futures contract, for soft red winter wheat delivered to Chicago, notched record prices early in the week. Then they plunged. Chicago futures ended the week 8.5% lower, the worst weekly performance since 2014 when wheat was coming down from a drought-induced spike. French markets, as well as on-the-spot trading in St. Louis and Kansas City, followed similar arcs.</p> <p>Still, the benchmark U.S. price, at \$11.07 a bushel, is 72% higher than a year earlier and analysts expect the war will keep wheat high. Germany's <a href="#">Commerzbank AG</a> on Friday boosted its spring-quarter price forecasts by 19% for Chicago futures and by about 14% in Paris.</p> <p>Rising wheat points to further <a href="#">inflation of food prices</a> and another force blunting the post-pandemic economic recovery. Global food prices hit an all-time high in February, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization. U.S. food prices in February were up 7.9% from a year earlier, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, taking a big bite out of <a href="#">Americans' purchasing power</a>.</p> <p>Analysts and traders don't know yet the extent to which global wheat supplies will be dented by the war. What remains of last year's crop has been kept off market due to the closure of Ukrainian ports and shippers' hesitancy to <a href="#">enter a war zone</a> to fetch Russian wheat. Meanwhile, it is unclear if growers in the</p>

region will be able to harvest winter wheat, which was planted in autumn, or plant spring crops in the coming weeks.

“Russian ports are operating normally but no one is willing to pay extremely high insurance costs to book cargoes from there,” said Will Osnato, senior research analyst with Gro Intelligence, an agricultural data firm.

Since wheat is priced in dollars, exporters in Russia, where the currency has plunged about 40% in 2022, could take cues from South American growers who in years past hedged their own currency devaluations by holding on to grains.

“This is the fog of war,” said Dave Whitcomb, head of research at Switzerland’s Peak Trading Research. “We just don’t know.”

The uncertainty inspired a frenzy of speculation that exacerbated the price swings. Investors poured so much cash into the Teucrium Wheat Fund, WEAT 3.40% which holds futures, that it ran out of shares to sell on Monday. The previous trading day, March 4, the exchange-traded fund issued about 16 million new shares, which was more than the 13 million or so that were outstanding before the invasion. U.S. financial regulators granted the fund permission on Wednesday to create and sell additional shares.

The fund’s assets under management ballooned to nearly \$500 million, up from \$86 million before Russia’s attack, but dropped to about \$341 million by the end of the week as wheat futures shed price.

“In six weeks they’ll start planting in Ukraine and Russia,” said Sal Gilbertie, president of Teucrium Trading LLC, which manages the wheat fund. “If it’s disrupted that means a future reduction in supplies that the world is counting on.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture on Wednesday lowered its expectations for Russian and Ukrainian wheat exports during the current marketing year, which began in June, by about 12%. Some of the lost supply will be replaced by exports from Australia, where a record harvest is expected, and India, which has been ramping up shipments abroad amid a string of bumper crops, the Agriculture Department said in its monthly market forecast.

The Agriculture Department expects U.S. farmers to plant slightly more wheat than last year, when the fewest acres were sown in more than a century. Lower yields are anticipated, due to continuing drought in the West and Northern Plains.

While American consumers can expect more sticker shock at the grocery store, the loss of Black Sea exports risks leaving some countries that rely on imports unable to meet their grain needs, analysts and traders say.

Egypt, the world’s largest wheat importer, recently canceled a tender after receiving a limited number of pricey offers. Turkey reduced an order size. Tanzania recently said that its wheat import bill jumped 50% for the 12 months through January, before the Russian attack roiled the market.

“The world’s poorest are going to suffer from this war,” said Mr. Gilbertie. “It’s a crime against humanity.”

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HEADLINE	03/13 US explores alternatives to save Iran deal
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-wont-negotiate-ukraine-related-sanctions-with-russia-to-save-iran-nuclear-deal-11647167692?mod=hp_lead_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-wont-negotiate-ukraine-related-sanctions-with-russia-to-save-iran-nuclear-deal-11647167692?mod=hp_lead_pos1</a>
GIST	The U.S. won’t negotiate exemptions to Ukraine-related sanctions on Russia <a href="#">to save the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal</a> and instead would try to strike an alternative agreement that excludes Russia if the Kremlin doesn’t back off from last-minute demands, a senior State Department official said.

With one of President Biden's top foreign-policy goals imperiled, the senior U.S. official said Washington would start exploring alternatives to the deal over the next week if Russia didn't [back away from its demands](#) for written guarantees exempting Russia from Ukraine-related sanctions that could curtail its future trade with Iran. Such guarantees could undercut the West's punishing array of sanctions leveled at Russia over [the Ukraine invasion](#).

"I don't see the scope for going beyond what is within the confines of the JCPOA," the senior U.S. official said, referring to the 2015 nuclear deal formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. "I think it's pretty safe to say that there is no room for making exemptions beyond those."

Former President [Donald Trump](#) exited the accord in 2018 and reimposed broad sanctions, saying the deal failed to stop Iran's path to a nuclear weapon. In response, Iran expanded its nuclear work, breaching most limits in the deal.

The official said an agreement between Iran and the U.S. was "within reach," saying only a few issues were holding up a deal when talks in Vienna were broken off Friday because of Russia's demand. The official called Russia's demands "the most serious stumbling block and obstacle to reaching a deal." There was no immediate comment from Iran or Russia.

European officials say Russia had promised to respond with its precise demands for guarantees in the next few days. They have also started to explore among themselves options for pursuing a deal without Russia, two diplomats said.

"We would know within a week whether or not Russia is prepared to back down," the U.S. official said. Earlier this month, as Western diplomats were seeking to wrap up the talks, Russia requested guarantees that its work under the JCPOA would be exempted from Western sanctions over Ukraine. The U.S. had given sanctions waivers for the 2015 deal.

However after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters Moscow wanted much broader guarantees, its chief negotiator in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, presented a second paper to European negotiators on Tuesday seeking to protect all future trade and investment against Ukraine-related sanctions.

It couldn't be determined whether Iran would be willing to negotiate an alternative deal without Russia, or whether China—which has grown closer to Russia—would participate. European officials also said Friday they would be open to exploring an alternative accord with Iran without Russia.

Mr. Ulyanov on Friday said his country's demands weren't the only reason an agreement on reviving the nuclear deal hadn't been reached. Since negotiations hadn't concluded, it was his country's right to raise its concerns, he said.

Time is pressing. U.S. and European officials say that Iran's nuclear work has expanded close to a point that the deal's main benefit to the West—keeping Iran months away from amassing enough nuclear fuel for a nuclear weapon—would be impossible. Iran is currently just a few weeks from that so-called breakout point.

The U.S. is also on the hunt for new oil supplies during the war in Ukraine, as it seeks to contain surging energy prices. Iran could supply up to a million barrels a day of new crude supplies eventually if sanctions are lifted.

One option for the U.S. and its partners would be to create an interim deal that could freeze some of Iran's activities and wind back aspects of its nuclear program in return for some level of sanctions relief from the U.S. Iran has always rejected the idea of an interim deal.

	<p>Another option would be to create what the senior U.S. official called a “replica of the JCPOA,” without Russia, which would assign Moscow’s tasks in the agreement elsewhere.</p> <p>“I do think we would be open to various alternatives. We are beginning to think about what those might be,” the official said. “We...at this point wouldn’t rule anything out.”</p> <p>Further complicating any attempt to re-craft a deal with Iran: Tehran has refused to let its negotiators talk directly to the U.S. until Washington lifts its sanctions. Regional tensions with Iran are growing again after a missile strike early Sunday which U.S. officials say originated from Iran and landed near an American consulate under construction in northern Iraq.</p> <p>Any new deal would also trigger U.S. legislation giving Congress time for an in-depth review of the accord.</p> <p>The negotiations in Vienna, which have dragged on for close to a year, aim to agree on the steps the U.S. and Iran would take to return into compliance with the nuclear deal. If Russia’s demands can be resolved, negotiators have said they could be back in Vienna within a few days to finish the talks.</p> <p>Iran has avoided calling out Russia and has continued to blame the failure to complete the talks on Washington. However there have been hints of irritation from Iranian officials, who have said they wouldn’t let external factors get in the way of their interests.</p> <p>The senior U.S. official declined to say whether an agreement would have been concluded by now without the Russian intervention. Among the issues still on the table is whether Iran’s Revolutionary Guards would have their Foreign Terrorist Organizations listing removed and what any conditions might be around that, Western diplomats say.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 US: full NATO response if Poland struck</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/russia-ukraine-latest-news-2022-03-11/card/u-s-warns-full-force-of-nato-would-respond-if-russia-hits-poland-zEmQR8bzJCRx5QiKilww">https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/russia-ukraine-latest-news-2022-03-11/card/u-s-warns-full-force-of-nato-would-respond-if-russia-hits-poland-zEmQR8bzJCRx5QiKilww</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan warned of a full-fledged NATO response if a Russian strike were to hit member-state Poland, after <a href="#">an attack on a Ukrainian military base</a> roughly 10 miles from the border.</p> <p>“If there is a military attack on NATO territory it would cause the invocation of Article 5, and we would bring the full force of the NATO alliance to bear in responding to it,” Mr. Sullivan said in an interview Sunday on CBS News’ “Face the Nation.” He was referring to the provision of the treaty that provides that if any NATO member is the victim of an armed attack, every other member will consider it to be an attack on all members.</p> <p>The Russian airstrike, which killed 35 people near the Polish border early Sunday, came one day after Moscow warned the West that it would consider arms deliveries to Ukraine as legitimate targets.</p> <p>Mr. Sullivan said the U.S. will continue supporting Ukrainian forces with military assistance.</p> <p>He also reiterated President Biden’s vow that the U.S. and its allies will “defend every inch” of the NATO territory and would respond even in the event of an accidental or unintentional strike by Russia.</p> <p>“All I will say is that if Russia attacks, fires upon, takes a shot at NATO territory, the NATO alliance would respond to that,” Mr. Sullivan said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Ukraine: Russia abducts another mayor</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/13/ukraine-mayor-abduction-kidnapping-dniprorudne-yevhen-matveev/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/13/ukraine-mayor-abduction-kidnapping-dniprorudne-yevhen-matveev/</a>
GIST	<p>Ukraine is accusing Russia of abducting a second mayor within the span of days — which would mark a new chapter in the Moscow’s invasion.</p> <p>Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, accused Russian forces on Sunday of abducting the mayor of a city in southeast Ukraine.</p> <p>“Today, Russian war criminals abducted another democratically elected Ukrainian mayor,” he <a href="#">tweeted</a>, referring to Dniprorudne Mayor Yevhen Matveev. “Getting zero local support, invaders turn to terror. I call on all states &amp; international organizations to stop Russian terror against Ukraine and democracy.”</p> <p>While at least two other Ukrainian officials cited Matveev’s kidnapping by Russian forces, the reports could not immediately be independently verified by The Washington Post.</p> <p>The Dniprorudne mayor’s alleged abduction comes days after the mayor of the southern port of Melitopol was reportedly taken by Russian troops, sparking large-scale protests there.</p> <p>They signal the Russian invasion could enter a new phase, one a British lawmaker warned would be marked by “a campaign of civilian abductions” designed to “break the spirit of the people of Ukraine.”</p> <p>On Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that Russian forces had <a href="#">captured the mayor of Melitopol</a>, Ivan Fedorov.</p> <p>Videos circulated by Ukrainian officials appeared to show Fedorov being led away by Russian soldiers on Friday with what resembled a hood over his head. Zelensky, who called the alleged abduction “simple terrorism,” warned it is the latest of a number of actions against mayors across the country who do not cooperate with the Russian forces occupying their cities and towns.</p> <p>With a second mayor now apparently abducted, Olexandr Starukh, the regional governor of Zaporizhzhia, <a href="#">said Sunday on Facebook</a> that “war crimes are becoming systemic.” He said Matveev “has been kidnapped.” Lesia Vasylenko, a Ukrainian lawmaker, called the alleged kidnapping a “terrorist” tactic.</p> <p>Alicia Kearns, a member of the British Parliament, <a href="#">tweeted</a> that Matveev was kidnapped as part of Russia’s “campaign of civilian abductions.” The Conservative lawmaker accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of abducting politicians to coerce them into supporting his invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Zelensky said in an <a href="#">address</a> Saturday that Russian forces have “switched to a new stage of terror, when they are trying to physically eliminate representatives of the legitimate local Ukrainian authorities.” He said that Russian forces’ capture of Fedorov was “a crime against democracy.”</p> <p>The Ukrainian president said democratic countries would equate Russia’s actions with those “of ISIS terrorists,” and asked for “guarantees of full security to all heads of communities across the country.” <a href="#">Crowds</a> gathered in Melitopol on Saturday to demand Fedorov’s release.</p> <p>Melitopol, with a population of about 150,000, has been under Russian control for two weeks. Despite the Russian occupation of the city, Fedorov, who is ethnically Russian, had encouraged recent demonstrations in Melitopol against the invasion.</p> <p>Russia has accused Fedorov of “terrorist activities,” according to <a href="#">the Associated Press</a>. The prosecutor’s office of the Luhansk People’s Republic, a Moscow-backed rebel region in eastern Ukraine, has claimed without presenting evidence that Fedorov was financing the nationalist militia Right Sector to “commit terrorist crimes against Donbas civilians.”</p>



	The mayor's alleged abduction prompted roughly 2,000 people on Saturday to protest outside the city hall building occupied by Russian forces, Zelensky said. Bundled-up against the cold, protesters in Melitopol chanted for Fedorov's release. "Bring back the mayor!" they said. "Freedom to the mayor!"
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Utility bills rise; persist warmer months?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/us-utility-bills-energy-prices-increase">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/us-utility-bills-energy-prices-increase</a>
GIST	<p>A dramatic rise in energy prices in the US is causing utility bills to soar, with many left wondering: what is driving the rise and will it persist through the warmer months?</p> <p>A variety of factors that range from the invasion of Ukraine to the pandemic to climate-related events are behind the increase that's affecting millions of people, putting a strain on household budgets and affecting home health and safety, especially among low-income families and communities of color.</p> <p>The cost of natural gas that's delivered through pipes was up 24% in February from the year prior, while electricity went up 9%. Price spikes are notably higher in places where electricity is generated from natural gas, such as the north-east, which saw a 16% increase in January from the same time last year, with prices dipping down to a 6% increase in February.</p> <p>While it is common for utilities to go up in the winter, in 2021 the price of natural gas had been rising all year long following the pandemic-induced lows of 2020. At the same time, weather-related disruptions from the February Texas freeze and a category 4 Hurricane Ida halted oil production in the Gulf coast, and the supply constraints led to higher prices as the demand increased.</p> <p>Fuel oil, still a major source of home heating in the north-east but less so in the rest of US, has seen the sharpest increase of 44% compared to the year prior. Its movement as a petroleum product, follows similar trends as gasoline, which also dipped in the early pandemic before surging.</p> <p>Nearly 1.3m households in New York state are at least two months behind on utility bills, accruing a debt of over \$1.7bn, according to state filings from 10 major utility companies.</p> <p>"Almost one in five New Yorkers are staring into potential multi-generational debt," said Richard Berkley, executive director of the Public Utility Law Project.</p> <p>Before the war in Ukraine, he would have expected the prices to dip back down as the weather warms up. "But now with sustained disruption of the world energy markets, we should expect to see higher prices till the end of the year," Berkley said, adding that the situation been different if the US wasn't so reliant on an energy source that that hinges upon the supply chain and the global market.</p> <p>"We need to build more wind, solar, hydro and tidal power, which are quite honestly expensive to create but are much cheaper in the future," Berkley said.</p> <p>Following the price increases, the New York governor, Kathy Hochul, called on the utility company Con Edison, which services New York City and Westchester county, to review its billing practices. A utility bill consists of the delivery charge and supply charge for the energy, the latter of which is not set by providers like Con Edison, nor the state and regulatory entities.</p> <p>"The extreme utility bill increases all of us are seeing are having a serious impact on our household budgets, and in response we are taking action," Hochul said in a press release. In a statement to the Guardian, a Con Edison representative wrote: "We are reviewing all of our practices that affect customer supply costs, including our energy-buying practices."</p> <p>The state's utility regulator has sent letters to all of the state's major electric and gas utilities requiring them to increase their outreach and education efforts with customers. Local and state governments have directed customers who are struggling to pay their utility bills to assistance programs such as Home</p>

Energy Assistance Program ( HEAP ), while energy providers encourage customers to enroll in payment plans.

But environmental justice groups worry that these options are not enough.

“There are already people who are in massive utility debt from the pandemic,” said Jasmine Graham, an energy justice policy manager at We Act for Environmental Justice non-profit.

Graham gave an example of one of the group’s members who is \$5,000 in debt, is supplementing her heating with a gas stove, and is pregnant while raising a child under the age of one. “Tell me how a payment plan is going to be enough for her?” Graham said.

Additionally, undocumented residents don’t have access to most federally funded programs that require citizenship, leaving a significant part of New York City’s population without access for help.

Communities of color and low-income people are more likely to live in older, less efficient buildings that result in a higher energy burden, or the percentage of the income spent on cost of heating, cooling and powering a home. In 2016 the state set a target that low-income New Yorkers should pay no more than 6% of their income toward energy bills.

In New York City, 32% of Black and 33% of Latino households have an energy burden above 6%, and one in four New Yorkers have an energy burden of over 17%.

Utility companies have a legal duty to hedge, or essentially protect their customers against rapid price increases, by means of accounting for winter-related spikes and locking in a lower price ahead of time. But both Graham and Berkley expect the investigations into Con Edison to reveal potential negligence in the hedging practice on the utility company’s end.

Meanwhile, Con Edison has asked the state for permission to increase its prices.

If passed, the utility company would raise its electric rate by 11% and gas by 18%. According to the company, the roughly \$1.7bn in additional revenue they seek would go to upgrading energy delivery systems. Graham said the recent and proposed hikes make a greater case for the importance of public power, or not-for-profit utilities that are community-owned and locally controlled.

“We need to move away from a model that’s reliant on corporations,” Graham said. “And move toward a democratic, renewable energy system that prioritizes energy affordability for low-income folks.”

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HEADLINE	03/13 Owning, operating a car more expensive
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/us-car-vehicle-expenses-rise">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/us-car-vehicle-expenses-rise</a>
GIST	<p>At the Lehigh Valley Mall, on the outskirts of Allentown, <a href="#">Pennsylvania</a>, Tony Saba is already feeling the impact of the rising cost of gas.</p> <p>“The price is going up to hell,” he said. “I cannot move like before. My car is in my garage. I can’t move it because I have no money.”</p> <p>Saba, a 70-year-old retiree, used to drive to the mall. He doesn’t go in any of the shops or restaurants – he just likes to sit in the comfy armchairs and chat with his friends.</p> <p>Now his car is out of commission, and he still wanted to come to the mall. But the bus takes too long, and is too expensive. So he called a friend, who picked him up.</p> <p>Saba’s story, in a nutshell, illustrates the problem many in America face. Owning and operating a car is getting more and more expensive as the oil price rises. The Russian invasion of Ukraine – and a resultant</p>

ban on Russian oil – will probably make things worse. But the US's largely ineffective public transport means Americans have little choice but to use their cars. In the majority of the US, Americans need their vehicles to work, shop, study and survive.

It's a reliance that dates back decades.

"In the US we really saw an increase in automobile use in the post-world war two period, the baby boom generation. At that point in time, we had this new availability of relatively inexpensive mass-produced automobiles, this is the first time that people from middle income households can purchase a motor vehicle," said Gregory Rowangould, the director of the [Transportation Research Center](#) at the University of Vermont and an associate professor in civil and environmental engineering.

"And at the same time you have soldiers returning from world war two, starting families, we have a huge population boom, so there's also a need for more housing."

At the time many cities were polluted, noisy and generally less attractive, Rowangould said. It led to a boom in the construction of suburban housing: cars and the suburbs went hand in hand.

"That has just been a pattern in the US that, once started, it's been really persistent."

The construction and planning of these new suburbs rarely included viable bus or train options. Many new neighborhoods didn't have walkable amenities either. Now, people needed cars to go shopping, or take their kids to the swimming pool, and certainly to get to work.

It's a legacy that has endured. Americans drive much, much more than other nationalities.

In 2019 American motorists drove an average of 14,263 miles a year, [according to](#) the US Department of Transportation. That puts the US at the top of the list in terms of miles driven, and it isn't even close. In the next highest country, Canada, people drove an average of 9,562 miles a year in 2018. The average car in the UK [was driven for 7,134 miles](#) in 2019.

America's reliance on cars and the current increase in gas prices will disproportionately affect those already struggling, Rowangould said. Lower-income households are forced to devote a larger share of their budget to transportation than wealthier households.

"They're more likely to own a vehicle that's less fuel efficient and older, they have less ability to be able to purchase an electric vehicle, so it's more difficult to acquire more fuel-efficient vehicles," Rowangould said.

In Pennsylvania the grassroots group [Pittsburghers for Public Transit](#) has called for investment in public transport to match the amounts spent on roads. According to [a recent report](#) by the group, 80% of federal transport funding goes to highways, and only 20% to public transit.

Laura Chu Wiens, executive director of PPT, said the disparity has perpetuated America's car dependency, and communities of color have suffered the most. "The households that are most reliant on public transit, or don't have easy access to a car, are disproportionately low-income households, unsurprisingly, black households, undocumented immigrants," Chu Wiens said.

Most American cities have some form of bus service. But travel can frequently involve people having to take multiple buses, or trains, just to get to work – something which has serious consequences. It can also be unsafe due to poor transit investment. "They're profoundly unsafe and undignified settings in which we ask transit riders to exist. And then not only that, we penalize them through things like fares for having worse-quality trips," Chu Wiens said.

A 2017 [study](#) by Harvard University found that commuting time was the most important factor in escaping poverty. As the New York Times [put it](#): “The longer an average commute in a given county, the worse the chances of low-income families there moving up the ladder.”

But even among those who own a car, many don’t enjoy driving, said Christof Spieler, director of planning at the Huitt-Zollars engineering company and author of [Trains, Buses, People](#): An Opinionated Atlas of US and Canadian Transit.

“For a lot of people their commute is the most miserable part of their day,” Spieler said.

Americans in favor of better public transport, and its benefits, may look to Europe or east Asia, where there are functioning subways, trams, bus systems and bike paths, and see little hope that the US will ever have the same.

Car culture is too entrenched, some believe. There’s no money to build railways. But people shouldn’t be so quick to admit defeat, Spieler said.

“One mistake a lot of people make is when they make the comparison to Japan, or they make the comparison to Europe, they assume these outcomes were much more inevitable than they were,” he said.

“But in the United States we could easily have made different choices. If you look at Europe, a lot of places actually look like they were headed in the American direction.”

Cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen are seen as incredibly bike friendly today, Spieler said, but in the 1960s “cars took over those cities”. The difference in those places is that there was “a moment of serious readjustment that happened in the 1970s and 80s of going in a different direction”.

Another argument is that the sheer size of the US means public transport wouldn’t work. Anyone who has experienced Amtrak’s cross-country services – the rail company offers little-used, days-long trips from Los Angeles to New Orleans, and Chicago to Florida – can attest to the problems of scale.

But having working public transport isn’t about linking the whole country, or about forcing bus routes down the throats of tiny villages.

“There are some places where owning a car really is the right answer. A rancher in Wyoming really should own a car, or a pickup,” Spieler said.

Most people are not ranchers in Wyoming, however. There are more than 50 cities in the US that have a metropolitan population of more than 1 million people, according to [the 2020 census](#).

Many of the people in those areas live in homes in the suburban sprawl, rather than in the city itself, however, and to really successfully implement a shift away from cars, some believe there has to be a shift in the very way we live – by moving people back towards the center of cities.

“If we really want to move the needle on this, we are talking about people’s lives changing and we are talking about people living differently, and I don’t want to understate that,” Spieler said.

Adie Tomer, Senior Fellow at Brookings Metro who leads the organization’s [Metropolitan Infrastructure Initiative](#), agreed that there was a need to change the way people live.

People moving towards cities from the suburbs has to happen, Tomer said, and better rail and bus networks will follow.

It might seem unrealistic, but there is hope. Tomer said that while suburbs, as it stands, “have won the day”, that doesn’t mean that, if given the choice, people would always choose a suburban life.

“Cities are just cool in America,” Tomer said. “And that is still present in our culture, but our actual development doesn’t actually reflect that.

According to Tomer, a “political window has opened”, caused by the gas prices surge, which could potentially lay the path for changes in how people understand living and transport.

In a recent [poll](#) more than 60% of Americans said they were willing to suffer higher gas prices in order to continue to support Ukraine, a victory for Joe Biden, who [has acknowledged](#) that US support for Ukraine will mean prices continue to rise.

Meanwhile some experts have suggested the spike in prices could [serve as a wake-up call](#) for the public and politicians to move away from a reliance on oil, and towards greener transport methods.

“If there is real American conversation that is different from what we’ve had in almost 40 years, about conservation, taking public transit for energy reasons, it could be a different moment,” Tomer said.

“Transportation is our [number one source](#) of greenhouse gas emissions in the US. That’s different than any of our peers. So there could be a window here to at least start to change the trajectory of the conversation.”

With gas prices [unlikely to fall](#) anytime soon, a shift away from America’s car dependency, and serious investment in public transport would not just benefit the environment, but also the millions of Americans who are struggling financially.

An improvement in transport would mean people could get to work quicker, or take their children out for the day.

For others, like Tony Saba, it would simply it easier to take a trip out to the Lehigh Valley Mall.

“I used to come here every day. I would call a friend and say: ‘Meet me in the mall,’” he said.

“I like it here. It’s social. It’s a nice life.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Russia strikes base close Polish border</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/13/russia-widens-attacks-on-ukraine-with-missile-strike-on-base-close-to-polish-border">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/13/russia-widens-attacks-on-ukraine-with-missile-strike-on-base-close-to-polish-border</a>
GIST	<p>Russia has escalated its war in Ukraine with a strike on a major military base close to the Polish border killing at least 35 people and injuring 134 more, according to the governor of the Lviv region.</p> <p>The attack happened hours after the Kremlin had warned that western supply lines into the embattled country were “legitimate targets”.</p> <p>Large explosions were seen on Sunday at the base in Yavoriv, a garrison city less than 10 miles from the Polish border. The rocket attack took place at 5.45am.</p> <p>“My windows shook. The whole house vibrated. It was dark. The sky lit up with two explosions,” said Stepan Chuma, 27, an emergency worker, who hurried to the scene with his colleagues.</p> <p>The facility has previously hosted foreign military trainers from the UK, US and other countries but it is not clear that any were at the base. Ukraine held most of its drills with Nato countries there before the invasion with the last major exercises in September.</p> <p>“Russia has attacked the International Centre for Peacekeeping &amp; Security near Lviv. Foreign instructors work here. Information about the victims is being clarified,” the Ukrainian defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said in an online post.</p>

The governor of the Lviv region, Maksym Kozytzkyi, said Russian forces fired more than 30 cruise missiles at the Yavoriv base. The 140 square-mile facility less than 25km (15 miles) from the Polish border, is one Ukraine's biggest and the largest in the western part of the country – and serves a similar function to the British army's training areas on Salisbury Plain.

The attack on the base is highly significant for a number of reasons. Long viewed with suspicion by Russia – whose media has claimed falsely in that the past the facility was a secret Nato base in Ukraine – the proximity, so close to the Polish border, marks a sharp escalation in the scope of Russian airstrikes.

There has been speculation too that the area has been used both to receive incoming weapons shipments for Ukraine's military as well as training the large numbers of foreign volunteers flocking to the country.

Simon Shuster of Time magazine, who was in the area the day before, said on Twitter: “When Russia bombed the base near Lviv last night, it had to assume Americans were likely to be killed or injured. A coordinator of foreign volunteers in Ukraine told me the base was a hub for 1000s of them, coming from all over to help Ukraine. I met some from US, UK, Australia.”

The attack comes less than 24 hours after Russia's deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, warned that [western shipments to Ukraine were “legitimate targets”](#).

Supporters of Ukraine, including the UK, Germany and the US, have been shipping thousands of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles into Ukraine using the country's western corridor in the Lviv region.

Ryabkov said that [Russia](#) had “warned the US that pumping weapons from a number of countries it orchestrates isn't just a dangerous move, it's an action that makes those convoys legitimate targets”. The attack is thought to be the westernmost carried out by Russia in [18 days of fighting](#).

Air raid sirens had been heard on previous nights in Lviv, a Unesco world heritage site 80km (50 miles) from the border with [Poland](#) and a safe haven for hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Ukrainians. But although the city's 700,000 residents are among the strongest supporters of Ukrainian independence from Moscow, it has so far remained untouched by Russian bombing.

The war continued to rage across the rest of Ukraine on Saturday. In the south-east, the town of Volnovakha has been totally destroyed by Russian bombardment, according to the [regional governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko](#). A hospital was destroyed, forcing people to gather in the basement as pro-Russian separatists took over the town.

“Volnovakha with its infrastructure as such no longer exists,” Kyrylenko told Ukrainian TV.

The town is close to the besieged port city of Mariupol, where new satellite imagery has shown the widespread damage inflicted since Russian forces surrounded the city 12 days ago.

More than 1,500 civilians have been killed, and humanitarian aid groups say those remaining have not had access to water or medications in days. Ukraine's president, [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#), urged Russia to uphold an agreed ceasefire to allow evacuations to proceed out of the city, after blaming Moscow for the failure of previous attempts.

Britain's defence ministry has said Russian ground forces were massed 25km (15 miles) from the centre of Kyiv, Reuters reported. Its residents also woke to the sound of air raid sirens, and along with the rest of the nation, the words of Zelenskiy ring in their ears: “We still need to hold on. We still have to fight.”

Seven civilians have died after coming under Russian fire while trying to flee fighting near Kyiv. Ukraine initially accused Russia of firing at a convoy of civilian evacuees from the village of Peremoha while they were in a designated humanitarian corridor, [but later said it was not such a route](#).



In a video posted to social media late on Saturday night, Zelenskiy urged Ukrainians to keep fighting, and said Russia could not conquer Ukraine. “They do not have such strength. They do not have such spirit. They are holding only on violence. Only on terror. Only on weapons, which they have a lot.

“But the invaders have no natural basis for normal life. So that people can feel happy and dream. They are organically incapable of making life normal! Wherever Russia come to a foreign land, dreams are impossible.”

Zelenskiy noted humanitarian corridors had been working, with 12,729 people evacuated on Saturday, and made another plea to the international community to keep doing more for Ukraine. “Because it is not only for Ukraine, but it is for all of [Europe](#).”

Russia was trying to create new “pseudo-republics”, he continued, adding that the city council members in Kherson, a southern city of 290,000, on Saturday rejected plans to set up such a system.

The Russian military has reportedly installed a new mayor in the occupied south-eastern Ukrainian city Melitopol, after the alleged abduction of the mayor, Ivan Fedorov, by Moscow’s troops on Friday afternoon. Zelenskiy has demanded his immediate release.

Russia may also be positioning itself to use chemical weapons, which would amount to a war crime, Nato has warned. Its secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, told the German newspaper Welt am Sonntag that the Kremlin was inventing false pretexts to justify the possible use of chemical weapons, Reuters reported.

“In recent days, we have heard absurd claims about chemical and biological weapons laboratories,” he said. “Now that these false claims have been made, we must remain vigilant because it is possible that Russia itself could plan chemical weapons operations under this fabrication of lies. That would be a war crime.”

Meanwhile, further appeals from global leaders urging Putin to order an immediate ceasefire have failed to yield results. France’s president, Emmanuel Macron, and the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, spoke to the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, by phone on Saturday, [but a French official said](#): “We did not detect a willingness on Putin’s part to end the war”.

The US president, Joe Biden, has authorised \$200m in weapons and other assistance for Ukraine, paving the way for the immediate shipment of small arms, anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons.

The rate of refugees crossing the Ukrainian border has slowed, but Ukraine’s neighbouring countries are still struggling to provide shelter for the estimated 2.6 million who have fled since the Russians invaded last month.

Neighbouring countries may feel some reprieve over the coming weeks, following Britain’s announcement of a scheme to accommodate refugees, after intense scrutiny over its [chaotic response](#) to the crisis. British people who open their homes to Ukrainians will get £350 a month (\$456) under a [“cash for accommodation” scheme](#).

Under the scheme Ukrainians who are matched and housed with a UK “sponsor” will be granted leave to remain for three years. They will be able to work, claim benefits and access public services in that time.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Day 18 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/13/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-18-of-the-russian-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/13/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-18-of-the-russian-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A rocket attack on a military base near Lviv <a href="#">has killed at least 35 people</a> and injured 134, according to the area’s governor. Large explosions were seen on Sunday at the base in Yavoriv, a garrison city close to the Polish border. The rocket attack took place at 5.45am.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Polish president, Andrzej Duda</b>, believes <a href="#">Russia could use chemical weapons</a> as Vladimir Putin is in “a very difficult situation”, and says that scenario would be a “gamechanger” for Nato.</li> <li>• <b>The Ukrainian military</b> says <a href="#">Russian forces are continuing to use civilian infrastructure for military needs</a>, placing units and equipment at high-risk objects and carrying out shelling on civilians in violation of international humanitarian law.</li> <li>• Ukraine <b>says its forces have claimed more than 12,000 Russian personnel</b> as well as 374 tanks, 1,226 armoured combat machines and 140 artillery systems.</li> <li>• <b>Britain’s defence ministry</b> says Russian forces are attempting to surround Ukrainian forces in the east of the country as they advance from the direction of Kharkiv in the north and Mariupol in the south.</li> <li>• The Ukrainian president, <b>Volodymyr Zelenskiy</b>, has claimed <b>Russia is trying to create new “pseudo-republics” in Ukraine</b> to break the country apart, but says Russian forces have neither the strength nor the spirit to conquer <a href="#">Ukraine</a>.</li> <li>• The <b>Russian military</b> has reportedly <b>installed a new mayor</b> in the occupied south-eastern Ukrainian city <b>Melitopol</b> following the alleged abduction of the elected mayor, Ivan Fedorov, on Friday afternoon.</li> <li>• <b>The town of Volnovakha in the Donetsk region of Ukraine has been totally destroyed by Russian bombardment</b>, according to the <a href="#">regional governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko</a>. A local hospital was destroyed, forcing people to gather in the basement as pro-Russian separatists took over the town.</li> <li>• <b>Seven civilians have died after coming under Russian fire while trying to flee fighting near Kyiv</b>. Ukraine initially accused Russia of firing at a convoy of civilian evacuees from the village of Peremoha while they were in a designated humanitarian corridor, <a href="#">but later said it was not such a route</a>.</li> <li>• <b>New satellite imagery of Mariupol is showing the widespread damage inflicted since Russian forces surrounded the city 12 days ago</b>. More than 1,500 civilians have been killed and humanitarian aid groups say those remaining have not had access to water or medications in days.</li> <li>• <b>The rate of refugees crossing the Ukrainian border has slowed</b>, but neighbouring countries are still struggling to provide shelter for the estimated 2.6 million who have fled since the Russians invaded last month. About 13,000 refugees were evacuated through humanitarian corridors today.</li> <li>• <b>Ukrainian officials informed the International Atomic Energy Agency</b>, the UN’s nuclear watchdog, that Russia was planning to take “full and permanent” control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant – an allegation that Russia denies.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	03/13 China new coronavirus cases double
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/12/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine?name=stylIn-coronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#shanghai-restricts-travel-further-as-chinas-new-cases-double">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/12/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine?name=stylIn-coronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#shanghai-restricts-travel-further-as-chinas-new-cases-double</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING — Shanghai ordered its residents over the weekend to avoid all but essential travel in or out of the city and halted long-haul bus services on Sunday, as a coronavirus outbreak continued to spread in the metropolis and across much of mainland China.</p> <p>While China still has far fewer Covid-19 cases than most countries, the daily count of infections has accelerated rapidly. The country’s National Health Commission reported 3,122 new cases on Sunday, up from 1,524 on Saturday and 1,100 on Friday, and a couple hundred per day just a week ago.</p> <p>The most severe outbreaks are in towns and cities in the northeastern province of Jilin, which accounted for two-thirds of the cases announced on Sunday. Two mayors were dismissed in the province on Saturday, in hard-hit Jilin City and in the Jiutai district of the city of Changchun.</p> <p>Nearly half of the cases across China that were announced on Sunday involved people who did not initially show symptoms. China has attributed this partly to a very high rate of vaccination, except among the elderly, and partly to the prevalence of the highly contagious Omicron variant, which sometimes</p>

	<p>produces many cases that are at least initially asymptomatic. A few cases of the Delta variant have also been detected near China's borders in recent weeks.</p> <p>Shanghai reported 65 cases on Sunday, all but one of them asymptomatic. Beijing reported seven cases on Sunday, only one of which was asymptomatic. Throughout the pandemic, China has paid special attention to minimizing cases in those two cities, which are centers of much of the country's economic and political activity.</p> <p>Just before midnight on Saturday, Shanghai announced that anyone with an essential reason for leaving or entering the city would also have to show negative results from a nucleic acid test taken in the two preceding days. Shanghai had already closed its schools as of Saturday morning, switching to online learning.</p> <p>Shanghai Disneyland announced that effective Sunday, it was halting all theater shows and requiring any visitors to show negative results from a nucleic acid test taken in the preceding 24 hours.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Western Ukraine base foreign training center</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/europe/the-base-attacked-in-western-ukraine-has-been-a-hub-for-foreign-militaries.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/europe/the-base-attacked-in-western-ukraine-has-been-a-hub-for-foreign-militaries.html</a>
GIST	<p>The base outside Lviv that was attacked by Russian forces early on Sunday was a key link between Ukraine's armed forces and Western militaries before the war — and has become an important logistics hub and training center for foreign fighters since Russia's invasion began.</p> <p>A Ukrainian military official said that up to 1,000 foreign fighters were training at the base — the International Peacekeeping and Security Center, which is also known as the Yavoriv military complex — as part of the new International Legion that Ukraine has formed to help fight Russia.</p> <p>Before the war, troops from the United States, Britain, Canada, Poland, Latvia and other Western allies trained Ukrainian forces there, starting in the 1990s. One of the buildings that was hit in the attack was in an area where American, Canadian and other foreign military instructors had stayed before the invasion, according to a broadcast journalist for the U.S. Army who covered multinational training at the base.</p> <p>Dozens of soldiers from the Florida Army National Guard had been training Ukrainian troops at the base as part of a NATO mission until Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III ordered them to leave the country last month, days before the Russian invasion.</p> <p>The base has also trained troops for peacekeeping operations that Ukraine has participated in, often as part of United Nations missions elsewhere in Europe and in Africa. Since the war began, Ukraine has recalled those peacekeepers, including a helicopter unit that had been deployed to the Democratic Republic of Congo.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Doctors: chaos Ukraine war spread Covid</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/covid-ukraine-russia-war.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/covid-ukraine-russia-war.html</a>
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — The last thing on anybody's mind these days in Ukraine seems to be <a href="#">Covid</a>.</p> <p>With millions of people on the move <a href="#">fleeing the Russian invasion</a>, health systems disrupted, and testing and vaccination programs suspended in many places, health officials fear that conditions could spread disease. But the pandemic, they said, was no longer a top priority.</p> <p>"People are not frightened about Covid anymore," said Dr. Marta Saiko, head of the therapy department at the Clinical Municipal Emergency Hospital in Lviv, in western Ukraine. "People are frightened of the war."</p>

The [chaos of war](#) has made it impossible to gauge how the pandemic is progressing. Coronavirus testing has largely been suspended since the war began on Feb. 24, and physicians have been told to make an observation of clinical symptoms without bothering with a laboratory test, Dr. Oleksandr Matskov, deputy director of the General Public Health Center of Ukraine, said in a written response to questions.

As a result, new recorded cases have declined sharply in the last two weeks, but “the decrease also may be natural,” he added, noting that the Omicron variant surge was already waning before Russian troops and tanks crossed the border.

The invasion has brought attacks on some of the largest cities, including the capital, Kyiv, and the second-largest city, Kharkiv, causing an exodus of people and a breakdown in services. Half the population of Kyiv, a city of about three million, has left, the city mayor said this week. Other cities are under siege with little or no access to medical services, Dr. Matskov wrote.

Ukraine has a relatively low Covid vaccination rate, barely one-third of the population, and millions of people fleeing their homes have crowded into evacuation trains, resettlement centers, temporary housing and underground shelters — conditions ripe for a new surge of infections. The areas of Ukraine that remain relatively safe from the war for now face new problems as the medical networks in those regions are overloaded by the influx of displaced people, Dr. Matskov added.

For the average Ukrainian these days, Covid ranks low on the list of worries.

“It faded into the background,” said Oleksandr, 46, a seaman who was returning from his job in Norway to join his family in Odessa in southern Ukraine. He declined to give his surname for security in wartime conditions. “Our enemy is much more frightening.”

His company in Norway had insisted on very strict rules during the pandemic, he said, but in Ukraine no one was bothering. He was resting inside a tent at the railway station in Lviv, waiting for the night train to Odessa. The half-dozen people inside were not wearing masks.

“I am vaccinated and at home they all got sick with Covid already,” he said with a shrug. He was going home to defend his city and his brother had already enlisted, he said.

Recently, Ukraine has also been grappling with a rare outbreak of polio, which spreads through the kind of unsanitary conditions and water contamination that are common in a refugee crisis. Compounding the threat, vaccination for polio and other diseases has slowed worldwide during the coronavirus pandemic.

Europe had been certified as polio-free, but in October, 20 people in Ukraine tested positive for the virus, which can cause fever and paralysis, and then it spread to a second region in the country. The outbreak seems to have been contained, but two patients were affected by paralysis, Dr. Matskov said.

The outbreak was identified by genetic sequencing to match a variant in Tajikistan, indicating that the virus was brought by someone traveling from Tajikistan. It is hard to tell when the threat has abated, because most people infected with poliovirus show no symptoms, but can still spread it for weeks or months.

“The risk of the spread of polio has increased significantly since the beginning of the war, as there are crowds of people in shelters, places of temporary residence of refugees at the borders, which cannot provide adequate sanitation and hygiene,” Mr. Matskov wrote. “Due to the damage to the infrastructure and the humanitarian crisis, there are interruptions in the supply of drinking water and food.”

Like much of Europe, Ukraine experienced a coronavirus surge earlier this year, averaging more than 35,000 cases per day in early February, and more than 200 daily deaths by the middle of the month, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. The official figures

	<p>declined rapidly from those highs — and then fell to zero in the days immediately after the Russian invasion, indicating a rupture in reporting.</p> <p>Dr. Matskov said cases were once again being registered as before in the regions not directly affected by fighting. “For 9 March there were 6,112 cases and 115 deaths,” he said.</p> <p>Ukrainians had been relatively disciplined about wearing masks inside shops and restaurants and on public transport before the war, but most people seem to have abandoned any protocol. As refugees have crammed on to trains and into station waiting halls, social distancing became impossible and there is barely a mask to be seen amid the crowds.</p> <p>Dr. Saiko, at the hospital in Lviv, said she had 32 patients with Covid in her ward, four of them in intensive care at mid-week, she said. Only one patient had died this week, she said.</p> <p>The caseload was much less than that of previous months, she said. “Now it’s usually four or five patients a day and it used to be 20 to 25 a day.”</p> <p>She said cases could increase because of the influx of people into Lviv from other parts of the country, but the hospital has the largest Covid ward and can manage 730 patients at a time. Supplies, she added, were “good enough.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Russia occupiers’ new mayor in Melitopol</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/ukraine-mayor-kidnapped-ivan-fyodorov.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/ukraine-mayor-kidnapped-ivan-fyodorov.html</a>
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — Ivan Fyodorov, as his name suggests, is an ethnic Russian in a southern Ukrainian city where Russian is commonly spoken and where cultural and familial ties to the motherland run deep.</p> <p>That would seem to make Mr. Fyodorov, the mayor of Melitopol, just the kind of person to welcome conquering Russian soldiers with open arms and flowers.</p> <p>Instead, he labeled them “occupiers.”</p> <p>On Friday evening, those Russian soldiers threw a bag over Mr. Fyodorov’s head and dragged him from his government office, Ukrainian officials said. Security camera footage from Melitopol’s Victory Square appears to show someone being escorted out of a government building by soldiers, but The Times could not verify the identity of the people in the video.</p> <p>The Russian news agency Tass reported on Saturday that the prosecutors office in Luhansk, one of the breakaway areas recognized by Moscow, was preparing terrorism charges against Mr. Fyodorov, accusing him of raising money of the far right group Right Sector.</p> <p>On Saturday, hundreds of his townspeople poured out into the streets in an expression of outrage and defiance, despite the presence of Russian troops.</p> <p>“Return the mayor!” they shouted, witnesses said and videos showed. “Free the mayor!”</p> <p>Nearly as soon as people gathered, the Russians moved to shut them down, briefly detaining one woman who they said had organized the demonstration, according to two witnesses and the woman’s Facebook account.</p> <p>Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, who has similarly greeted the Russian offensive with defiance and bravado, said the kidnapping of the mayor demonstrated the falsehood propagated by the Kremlin of a Russian incursion to save the country from a cabal of neo-Nazis in the capital, Kyiv.</p>

“For years they have been lying to themselves that people in Ukraine were supposedly waiting for Russia to come,” he said. “They did not find collaborators who would hand over the city and the power to the invaders.”

Melitopol came under fierce assault on the first day of the war, Feb. 24, and Russian soldiers entered only days later. Since then, Mr. Fyodorov had openly encouraged resistance, earning him the support of the public and the ire of the occupying army.

The mayor, 33, lanky, fit and photogenic, posted brief live broadcasts almost daily on social media to update Melitopol residents on the situation in the city — which lies just north of Crimea, the peninsula that Russia annexed in 2014. On at least one of the posts, explosions could be heard in the night behind him as he tried to reassure residents that the city was functioning as normally as possible.

On March 2, for example, noting that armed men had opened fire in the direction of some demonstrators, he warned residents away from confrontations with the Russian soldiers during protests and asked them to respect a 6 p.m. curfew. “I consider it unacceptable when civilians are shot at!” he wrote. “Melitopol residents, in turn, are asked not to provoke and to behave peacefully on the streets. Our task is to save your life and safety.”

On March 5, he announced that the city was working to restore 31 private houses destroyed by the Russian forces, and he repeatedly thanked local firms for contributing goods and services to help hundreds of displaced families.

All along the mayor made it abundantly clear that his administration would not cooperate with the Russians, and he kept the Ukrainian flag flying high over the city’s central square.

“We are not cooperating with the Russians in any way,” Mr. Fyodorov said in an interview with the BBC two days before he was taken by the Russian soldiers. “They have not tried to help us, they cannot help us and we do not want their help.”

He told residents where to buy milk and medicine, published updated lists of what pharmacies or A.T.M.s were operating and warned repeatedly that looters would be identified and punished. He urged them to keep paying their electricity bills, since the money went toward salaries, and as public transportation ceased operating asked residents to give free rides to medical workers.

Residents responded with an outpouring of gratitude, thanking him profusely for staying at his post even after the Russian troops controlled the city. “You are the best mayor!” read one enthusiastic response to his social media messages, while another wrote “You are our hope!!”

Others worried about his health, given that Mr. Fyodorov appeared oblivious to the cold, standing outdoors in just a light sweater and a down vest as the winter wind howled around him.

“Ivan Sergeyevich, why don’t you take care of yourself?” wrote one woman, using his first name and his patronymic, a polite form of address in the Russian-speaking world. “Are you standing without a jacket in such cold weather? Please dress warmer!”

Born in Melitopol, a city of just over 150,000 people, Mr. Fyodorov holds degrees in economics and management, and worked briefly for a company doing medical imaging before entering politics. He served on the city council for five years, from 2010 to 2015, and held various posts including deputy mayor, before being elected mayor in December 2020.

To that point, while he may have harbored exceptional talents, in the eyes of the world he was just another anonymous local official.

Then came Feb. 24, and his courageous stand against the Russian occupiers. But then he was led away in the hood, and has not been seen or heard from since.



The episode is part of what Ukrainian officials say is a pattern of intimidation and repression by the Russian forces that is growing increasingly brutal. It also illustrates a problem that Russia is likely to face even if it manages to pummel cities and towns into submission: widespread hatred, simmering unrest and, possibly, revolt.

President Zelensky sought to tap into that public rage in two videotaped speeches released on Saturday.

“The whole country saw that Melitopol did not surrender to the invaders,” he said. “Just as Kherson, Berdyansk and other cities where Russian troops managed to enter didn’t — temporarily managed to enter. And this will not be changed by putting pressure on mayors or kidnapping mayors.”

He added: “Do you hear it, Moscow? If 2,000 people are protesting against the occupation in Melitopol, how many people in Moscow should be against the war?”

Mr. Zelensky said he had raised the fate of the mayor in calls with the leaders of Germany and France. In the United Nations Security Council, Ukraine’s ambassador also asked the Russians to release him.

“We expect them, the world leaders, to show how they can influence the situation,” Mr. Zelensky said. “How they can do a simple thing — free one person, a person who represents the entire Melitopol community, Ukrainians who do not give up.”

Mr. Zelensky said what he called the “kidnapping” of the mayor was part of a broader shift in tactics. “They have switched to a new stage of terror, when they are trying to physically eliminate representatives of the legitimate local Ukrainian authorities,” he said.

A new mayor, Galina Danilchenko, a former member of the city council, was appointed by the Russians on Saturday, according to statements by other regional officials on social media. Ms. Danilchenko was immediately denounced in various posts as a “traitor.”

In a short video carried by Ukrainian news organizations, Ms. Danilchenko said her that her main task was to adapt the city to “a new reality in order to as quickly as possible live in a new way.” She proposed establishing some manner of “people’s committee” to address critical issues for the city and the region.

Sergey Minko, who represents Melitopol in the Verkhovna Rada, the national Parliament, accused the Russians of violating human rights. “The war is gaining momentum,” he wrote on Facebook, “The occupiers are increasingly defying the norms and principles of international law, in particular humanitarian law.”

He described Mr. Fyodorov as a “wonderful” mayor who had managed to keep city services running during the invasion.

When people waving the blue and gold of the Ukrainian flag took to the streets of Melitopol last weekend, Mr. Fyodorov encouraged the demonstration. In his most recent post on Facebook, he thanked business leaders who were helping the community in the moment of strife. “Together we will overcome anything!” he said.

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HEADLINE	03/13 UK vs oligarchs: ‘gloves are now off’
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/europe/uk-oligarchs-russia-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/europe/uk-oligarchs-russia-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	LONDON — On Friday, the day after Britain blacklisted seven prominent Russian oligarchs, residents of the wealthy London borough of Kensington and Chelsea rolled a washing machine overflowing with fake pound notes in front of a multimillion-dollar townhouse belonging to the family of the president of Azerbaijan.

It was a camera-ready stunt that made a serious point: For Britain to be successful in curbing the flood of dirty money — a phenomenon some call the “London laundromat” — it needs to go further than imposing sanctions on highly visible Russians like [Roman Abramovich, the billionaire owner of the Chelsea soccer club](#).

The Azerbaijani leader, Ilham Aliyev, is one of hundreds of wealthy foreigners who have exploited Britain’s lax regulations to amass property and other assets, often under a web of offshore companies that disguise their ownership. Others have parlayed their fortunes into gilt-edged social status, endowing revered British cultural and educational institutions, or donating money to the Conservative Party.

Targeting these figures will be even more challenging than going after boldface names like Mr. Abramovich, whose ties to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia are longstanding and well documented. But the protesters in Kensington said such an effort was crucial if Britain genuinely wanted to rid itself of the taint of dirty money.

“The crisis exposed the issue of Kremlin-linked money in the U.K., but it’s a much more systemic, global problem, with London sheltering this kind of money,” said Flo Hutchings, who helped found a neighborhood group, Kensington Against Dirty Money. “We hope this situation will have a snowball effect.”

On Friday, Britain struck a blow in that direction, imposing sanctions on 386 members of the Duma, the Lower House of Russia’s Parliament, for [recognizing the independence of two separatist regions](#) of Ukraine, Donetsk and Luhansk. That will prevent the lawmakers from traveling to Britain and freeze their assets in the country — potentially a heavy penalty for Duma members who do not have oligarch-scale wealth.

Even some of Britain’s harshest critics said its [latest moves](#) showed a new commitment. In addition to Mr. Abramovich, [the government blacklisted](#) Igor Sechin, a confidant of Mr. Putin’s who runs the oil giant Rosneft; Andrey Kostin, a banker known for renting a lavish ski chalet during the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland; and Oleg Deripaska, a well-connected industrialist.

Mr. Deripaska had employed a Conservative member of the House of Lords, Greg Barker, as chairman of a metals company he partly owns. Last week, under intense political pressure, Mr. Barker stepped down from the company’s board.

“The gloves are now off in the U.K.,” said William F. Browder, an American-born British financier who has campaigned against corruption and human-rights abuses in Russia. “They hit Deripaska, who has his own representative in the House of Lords. I don’t think they’re specifically avoiding anyone.”

Still, on some level, Britain is simply catching up. Most of the Russians blacklisted by Britain had already been penalized by the United States or the European Union. While Britain has imposed sanctions on 18 oligarchs since the start of the Russian assault on Ukraine, on Feb. 24, its list includes fewer than half of the 35 people identified by the jailed Russian opposition leader, Aleksei A. Navalny, as candidates for blacklisting because of their role in propping up a corrupt system.

Britain also signaled the measures against the Duma members last month, effectively giving them time to clean out their British bank accounts, though analysts said some were likely to have stranded real estate in London.

“Some of the smaller fry are almost more important because they won’t have millions here, but have something and it will irritate them,” said Chris Bryant, a lawmaker for the opposition Labour Party, who has called on the government to do more to root out corrupt money.

Another tactic for the richest of the oligarchs is to make generous donations to the arts, education or charity — a form of “reputation laundering” that makes them harder to punish. A handful of oligarchs have become pillars of British society.

In [a report in December on corrupt money in Britain](#), Chatham House, a research institute on foreign affairs, cited the Russian financier Dmitry Leus, who it said was “a supporter of St George’s Hospital, runs a children’s charity, supports a sports club in London, and is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.”

“He also attempted to become a patron of the Prince of Wales’s foundation, making a £535,000 donation,” the report said. “However, the foundation later returned the donation, having learnt that Leus had spent time in a Russian prison.”

Leonard Blavatnik, a Ukraine-born British American billionaire, donated almost \$100 million to Oxford University to build a school of government, and his name is on a wing of the Tate Modern Museum in London. One of the wealthiest people in Britain, Mr. Blavatnik has kept his distance from Mr. Putin, though he made his fortune in the post-Soviet breakup, investing with a fellow oligarch, Viktor Vekselberg.

“You have to be careful about where to draw the line,” Joe Powell, a founder of Kensington Against Dirty Money, said of going after individuals. “This is not meant to be an anti-Russia or anti-Russian campaign. This is first about transparency.”

For the activists, it is easier to shine a spotlight on Mr. Aliyev, the Azerbaijani leader, whose government engages in repression and human-rights abuses, according to the State Department. The problem with the influx of money like Mr. Aliyev’s, Mr. Powell said, is that it distorts the property market, making affordable housing scarce while leaving thousands of high-end residences empty.

The townhouse in Kensington is one of a [portfolio of London properties](#), worth tens of millions of dollars each, owned by offshore companies with ties to Mr. Aliyev or his relatives. The ownership details came to light in the [Pandora Papers, a trove of leaked financial documents that were published, starting last October](#), by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

But none of this has so far prompted Britain to act against Mr. Aliyev. His country is not involved in the war in Ukraine, even if he and Mr. Putin are friendly. Azerbaijan also maintains cordial relations with Britain, which is a major investor in its energy industry. Last year, Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain toasted 30 years of diplomatic ties, saying, [“cooperation is currently at an all-time high.”](#)

Though Mr. Johnson has pressed hard for sanctions against Russia, [including removing its banks from the SWIFT financial transfer network](#), he has been slower to target London’s rich Russians. That, critics say, reflects the fact that his Conservative Party has been the beneficiary of their largess.

Since Mr. Johnson became prime minister in 2019, the party, or its constituency associations, have received 1.93 million pounds (about \$2.5 million) from donors who are either Russian or who made money from Russia, according to calculations by the opposition Labour Party, based on disclosures to the Electoral Commission. The Tories typically raise more than 20 million pounds (\$26 million) a year in private donations.

Among the Russian Tory donors are the industrialist Alexander Temerko and the financier Lubov Chernukhin, with whom Mr. Johnson played tennis in exchange for a check before he became prime minister.

“These are not just happy-go-lucky Russians who came to the U.K. after starting some kind of a burger joint in Moscow,” said Thomas Mayne, a visiting fellow at Chatham House and an author of its report. “These are people with very clear links to the Kremlin or to people who have had roles in the past that are likely to raise security issues.”

Such concerns came up in the case of Evgeny Lebedev, a 44-year-old Russian-British press baron and friend of Mr. Johnson’s, whom he gave a seat in the House of Lords. Mr. Lebedev’s father, Alexander

	<p>Lebedev, was an official in the K.G.B. who became an oligarch. Security agencies raised questions about his father's background, according to a person familiar with the matter, but Mr. Johnson pressed ahead.</p> <p>"For many years, we turned a blind eye to this and all of a sudden, we are worried about Russian money," Mr. Mayne said. "Well, it's a little bit too late."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/12 Italy seizes another Russian superyacht</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/italy-seizes-another-russian-superyacht/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/italy-seizes-another-russian-superyacht/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Italian authorities have seized a superyacht owned by Russian billionaire Andrey Melnichenko as pressure on Russia's elite continues following the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The vessel seized by Italian financial police is owned by Russian billionaire Andrey Melnichenko, founder of fertilizer company EuroChem, and is worth an estimated \$580 million.</p> <p>It may be the world's biggest sailing yacht and was docked in the port of Trieste in northern Italy, according to a statement from Prime Minister Mario Draghi's office.</p> <p>Italian authorities previously detained superyachts owned by billionaires Gennady Timchenko and Alexey Mordashov as part of EU efforts to punish wealthy Russians with ties to President Vladimir Putin.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/13 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ready?</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/us/suicide-hotline-mental-health-988.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/us/suicide-hotline-mental-health-988.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline — the number posted on student identification cards, atop Google search results and in warning labels on television shows — is about to get a major reboot, casting it as the 911 for mental health.</p> <p>With an infusion of federal money, the upgraded Lifeline starting in July will have its own three-digit number, 988, and operators who will not only counsel callers but eventually be equipped to dispatch specially trained responders. That will reduce interventions by armed law enforcement and reliance on emergency rooms — and ultimately keep people alive, advocates say.</p> <p>But there are growing concerns that the 24-hour hotline, already straining to meet demand, will not be able to deliver on the promises of the overhaul unless states supplement the federal money with significant funds for staffing, according to interviews and government reports.</p> <p>Right now, the crisis line is answered by a patchwork national network of more than 180 call centers, often nonprofits, that juggle several hotlines and rely on both paid counselors and volunteers. A majority of centers run on shoestring budgets, with little or no backing from states; many do not have funding specifically for answering Lifeline calls, according to a survey. Some use golf outings, benefit breakfasts and other fund-raisers to help pay the bills.</p> <p>But after the number changes to 988 — a shift that involves upgrading telecom infrastructure and bringing more call centers online — use of the hotline is expected to grow exponentially over the next few years. (The current number is <a href="tel:800-273-8255">800-273-8255</a>.)</p> <p>Already, of the approximately two million phone calls to the Lifeline last year, about 330,000 — roughly 17 percent — were abandoned before a caller could get help, according to a New York Times data analysis. The texting and online chat lines, which together fielded another million contacts last year, lagged further behind, not attending to 41 percent of texts and 73 percent of chats. Calls and messages are abandoned for any number of reasons, but in interviews, callers blamed hold times and call center directors bemoaned limited capacity.</p>

The only call center in South Carolina, for instance, until recently operated out of an old, dark basement, near a boiler room. The last remaining one in Louisiana has struggled to keep up with an influx of calls after another center closed and its replacement went offline during the pandemic. Minnesota and Wyoming have had periods with no centers at all. When local centers cannot pick up, calls are pushed to national backup centers, where counselors are less likely to be familiar with local resources and wait times can be too long for people in crisis.

“We can’t help them if they don’t connect with our service,” said Dr. John Draper, the executive director of the Lifeline and an executive with Vibrant Emotional Health, a New York-based nonprofit, which manages the Lifeline for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The changes at the Lifeline come at a time of growing mental health concerns exacerbated by the pandemic, including what the U.S. surgeon general has warned is a crisis among young people. Suicides in the United States have increased over the past two decades to about 45,000 a year.

The rising toll underscores the need to both quickly fix the fractures within the existing Lifeline and build out its capacities, mental health advocates say, so it can be available to support people like Valerie, a 24-year-old in Burlington, N.C. (She requested that her last name be withheld for privacy.)

As a teenager, she made dozens of late-night calls to the Lifeline. A volunteer named Chris, who worked the late shift, usually would pick up and talk her to safety. But during the last several years, she has found it increasingly difficult to reach a counselor. Several times, she said, she hung up and harmed herself.

“If you are in a crisis, you need help immediately,” she said in an interview.

Others described similar experiences. A woman from Michigan, who said she waited twice for over an hour before hanging up, likened the experiences to calling airline customer service — except that she was seeking suggestions on “not killing myself.” A teenager from Mississippi recounted calling three times one night without getting through, and then overdosing.

“They have every right to expect that the system is available to them, and we know that it’s going to take time to build upon what was really a system that was under-resourced and quite fragmented,” said Dr. John Palmieri, who is leading the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s 988 rollout efforts.

In a December report to Congress, not previously made public, the agency called the system “understaffed,” saying it had “not grown quickly enough to keep pace with existing demand.”

“There are thousands of users — many of whom may be in suicidal crisis — who seek assistance and are unable to get the lifesaving help they deserve,” the report said.

An estimated 4 percent of Lifeline callers are believed to be at imminent risk or actively attempting suicide, according to another recent government report, while another 23 percent have had suicidal thoughts within 24 hours of calling. Many are repeat callers — and, data shows, call centers can resolve about 80 percent of crises without further intervention, like sending the police.

When the Lifeline can pick up — when it works as intended — it is effective, researchers say, because it gives people someone to talk to in their darkest moments. “That can make the difference between someone being alive and not alive,” said Madelyn Gould, a psychiatric epidemiologist at Columbia University.

Her assessment matches feedback that many callers shared on social media. One said a counselor had talked her “off the ledge.” Another wrote, “This line has saved my life on multiple occasions, including tonight.”

**‘Lean, Clean, Working Machine’**

Within a few years of the introduction of 988, the Lifeline is likely to attract tens of millions of people seeking help, estimates show. Those projections are driving mental health advocates as they prod state lawmakers to approve funding.

“Our concern is very much about whether there will be someone to answer that call when someone is in crisis,” said Hannah Wesolowski, chief advocacy officer for the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

In December, the Biden administration authorized a one-time influx of \$282 million to upgrade infrastructure and fortify call centers, bringing many more online. The Lifeline’s central operations have historically been underwritten each year by the federal government, most recently receiving \$24 million in 2021. Each of the call centers, which can cost millions of dollars a year to staff, gets an annual federal stipend of \$2,500 to \$5,000, as well as an occasional larger grant, but they are mainly on their own to source funding.

The law establishing 988 — signed by President Donald J. Trump in October 2020 with bipartisan support — gave state lawmakers the option of raising money for call centers the same way they do for 911: with a monthly fee on phone bills. These fees collect an estimated \$3 billion annually for 911, helping to ensure ongoing funding.

For 988, such fees could also help pay for mobile response teams that can be dispatched to people in crisis, as well as for specialized triage centers — both significant, and costly, elements of what advocates see as a watershed opportunity to recast the delivery of mental health care.

Paying for 988, and what comes with it, has emerged as a contentious issue for states. Some lawmakers are wary of adding what they see as a new tax. Others think 988 is redundant with other resources. And telecommunications lobbyists, while broadly supportive of 988, have pushed back on some proposed fees.

Only four states have authorized a phone-bill charge for 988, according to groups tracking statehouse deliberations. At least a dozen other states have pending legislation related to the 988 rollout, with some looking to tap general funds or Medicaid money to pay for it. Some states have approved studies or other approaches, but many have made no discernible movement on funding.

As lawmakers in Kansas debated a bill last month that would add a 20-cent monthly fee on all phone bills, John Barker, a Republican state representative, said he supported 988, but the fee would be burdensome for poor residents. “It is just like the United States Congress, though, to send us something like this” — with instructions that “you are going to fund it,” he said.

Representative Tony Cárdenas, a Democrat from California and a main congressional proponent of 988, said the reimagined Lifeline would reduce costs by limiting police interventions in mental health emergencies. “With all due respect, 988 is going to save the taxpayers a whole lot of money,” he said.

Xavier Becerra, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, has been on a national speaking tour about mental health and talking with governors about 988, who he said had been receptive. The goal, he said, is to replace the current system with a “lean, clean, working machine so that we can get this done for the people that call in.”

### **Answering the Phone**

Jennifer Battle, who runs a Houston call center that answers the Lifeline, worked on the original plans for 988, thinking that it would be an “amazing” upgrade. But she has grown concerned as ambitions expanded to include emergency workers and mental health triage centers — all as the state-by-state funding has fallen short.

“The crisis centers are like, ‘You don’t get any of those other things if people aren’t here to answer the phone,’” said Ms. Battle, director of access at the Harris Center, which provides services for mental health issues and developmental disabilities.



When the Lifeline began in 2005, its calls were routed to pre-existing call centers, many of which added it to their roster of numbers despite the lack of funding because it aligned with their mission.

Over time, call volume swelled, but funding did not keep up. Incoming calls have nearly doubled since 2016; the portion of abandoned ones has remained around 17 percent, data shows. The Lifeline said 80 percent of callers who disconnected did so within two minutes of the automated greeting, and about a quarter of those who hung up tried again within 24 hours and got through. (The data excludes calls received from U.S. territories, as well as those routed to the veterans and Spanish-language lines.)

One goal of 988 is to eventually answer 95 percent of all incoming calls within 20 seconds. The data analysis showed that only two states had Lifeline answer rates above 95 percent in the fourth quarter of last year. Thirty-three states had more than 15 percent of their calls abandoned.

“I don’t think it is acceptable,” said Justin Chase, chief executive of Solari Crisis and Human Services, based in Arizona, a state where 93 percent of calls are answered. “People call in their most dire state of need.”

As part of the 988 rollout, new federal grants are allowing centers to hire more counselors, although those efforts have been hampered by a nationwide worker shortage. Backup centers are also getting a major boost, with new funding to build capacity.

West Virginia’s lone call center answering the Lifeline, First Choice Services, also answers more than 15 other numbers, including ones for gambling, tobacco and drug and alcohol addiction, most with volume rising during the pandemic. Still, Lata Menon, the center’s chief executive, said her organization has kept up. And though 988 will come with new responsibilities — the center, for example, does not yet field chats or texts — there are indications that more funding is coming.

“We have a very real fear that without funding our program in a substantial way,” she said, “our West Virginia callers will suddenly be facing what has been a problem nationally.”

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HEADLINE	03/12 Russia nuclear escalation impact to WA?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/what-russias-nuclear-escalation-means-for-washington-state-home-to-the-globes-third-largest-atomic-arsenal/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/what-russias-nuclear-escalation-means-for-washington-state-home-to-the-globes-third-largest-atomic-arsenal/</a>
GIST	<p>Beneath the commercial and recreational vessels and island-bound ferries that navigate Puget Sound on any given day, something else swims secretly armed with a payload sufficient to permanently reshape a continent.</p> <p>Eight hulking Ohio-class nuclear attack submarines, each nearly as long as two football fields and armed with a spectrum of nuclear weapons, call Naval Base Kitsap at Bangor on the Kitsap Peninsula home. At any given moment, seven of them are armed with nuclear warheads and discreetly traversing the Pacific Ocean while one refuels at Bangor.</p> <p>These warheads make Washington state host to the globe’s third-largest arsenal of deployed nuclear weapons — an estimated 1,120 — behind only Russia and the United States as a whole, whose stockpiles still number in the thousands, despite decades of reductions, according to the Federation of American Scientists.</p> <p>One weapon in particular on those subs is at the apex of relevance in its short life: The W76-2, a reduced-payload nuclear warhead designed to counter Russia. It was rushed into production by the Trump administration and greenlighted by Congress in anticipation of a moment precisely like this one — a Russian invasion of a friendly nation, where President Vladimir Putin’s “escalate to de-escalate” doctrine could inch the world’s nuclear superpowers closer and closer to an exchange.</p>

Bellevue's U.S. Rep. Adam Smith, a Democrat and chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, worries that the warhead's reduced yield would make it more tempting for a president to use. Even if the rival nations refrain from trading nuclear strikes, Smith knows well that every twitch from a nuclear superpower creates a cascade of ripples to other nuclear-armed states, and could kick-start a new arms race.

"It's an important moment for the entire country and the entire world, including Washington state," said Smith in an interview last week after being briefed by the Pentagon on the situation in Ukraine. "It's a more dangerous and potentially conflicted world, and we're all going to have to reckon with it cautiously."

It would take many steps of escalation for Ukraine to turn into a nuclear exchange involving Russia and the U.S., according to Hans Kristensen, who closely tracks nuclear forces worldwide at the nonprofit Federation of American Scientists in Washington, D.C.

Among them: Putin using a nuclear weapon in the conflict zone, or the U.S. being drawn into active combat.

"At the outset, it would require a direct military clash of some magnitude between Russia and NATO," Kristensen said. "I don't think there's a snowball's chance in hell that nuclear weapons would come into play in Ukraine. That's crazy, even for Putin."

Putin wasted no time escalating nuclear rhetoric after his military began its invasion of Ukraine just over two weeks ago, moving his arsenal to high alert on the fourth day.

As Russia's attack met unexpectedly stiff resistance, U.S. intelligence officials noted that Russian military strategy favors escalating conflicts as a means of controlling them, particularly when conventional forces are overwhelmed.

To stave off any gains that advantage Ukraine, Putin has bracketed the conflict with political red lines that threaten to tip the nuclear balance: No NATO combatants, no no-fly zone and no aerial intervention from neighboring states.

The U.S. opted not to follow Russia's lead and did not elevate the alert status of its nuclear weapons. The Pentagon also canceled a scheduled test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile days after Putin's announcement.

That has fostered optimism among some nuclear scholars and key members of Congress that Russia and the United States will keep their nukes holstered.

"Let me reassure the public: I do not think we are on the brink of a nuclear conflict," Smith said. "Putin is not suicidal."

### **A new weapon**

In January 2020, life on the Olympic Peninsula carried on normally. Spectators were treated to an underground tour of Port Angeles, patrons swarmed community art shows and seats at casinos were full. Patches of dry weather provided hikers forest refuge from the long Pacific Northwest winter.

But in the waters off the Kitsap Peninsula, an important shift between nuclear-armed nations was taking shape. That month, the U.S. armed its nuclear attack subs with the new W76-2 warhead, a fresh addition to the inventory that would change decision-making processes about the nuclear strategies of Washington, Moscow, Beijing and Pyongyang, North Korea.

The new small-scale nuke was strapped on missiles in subs alongside its high-yield, city-busting cohorts, the W76-1 and W88. Subs based at Bangor troll the Pacific armed with a mix of 630 nuclear warheads, while 490 more sit in storage in the Strategic Weapons Facility located next to the submarine base.

The W76-2 warhead was born on paper in February 2018, on page 18 of former President Donald Trump's 100-page unclassified Nuclear Posture Review. It also called for a new nuclear warhead for sea-launched cruise missiles on Navy ships. New presidents have been conducting these studies for a quarter century to adjust U.S. nuclear doctrine for changing times and to reflect their priorities.

The U.S. at the time had barely waded into its most ambitious update to the nuclear arsenal since the Cold War, a planned 30-year, \$2 trillion refresh.

Although the modernization campaign began under the Obama administration, Trump's review strayed dramatically from the four presidents who preceded him. The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a defense-oriented Washington, D.C., think tank, noted at the time of the posture review's release that it "appears to place increasing emphasis on nuclear weapons as an instrument of national power."

Instead of minimizing nuclear weapons, it emphasized them, even as significant arms-control accords between the U.S. and Russia crumbled. In 2019, the U.S.' count of nuclear warheads saw its first year-over-year growth since 1996, according to the U.S. State Department.

Trump's most ambitious nuclear decision was creation of the W76-2 warhead, carried primarily on subs based at Bangor, which cover the Pacific Ocean, and Kings Bay, Georgia, whose Atlantic fleet covers the current conflict zone in Ukraine.

Despite objections in Congress, primarily from Democrats, and arms control experts, the warhead was rushed into production in just 14 months and for a total of \$94.6 million, according to the Congressional Research Service. Both figures constitute marvels of efficiency from the production network of private contractors.

But at what cost to nuclear stability, critics ask? "There is no such thing as a 'tactical' nuclear weapon," Smith said, referring to the alternate name for low-yield warheads.

"In this era when we know exactly what nuclear weapons are, and we have nuclear weapons five, 10, 20 times more potent than we had in World War II, introducing the idea of tactical nuclear weapons is dangerous. It will not be manageable. Once a nuclear weapon is used, we cannot promise our response will be proportional."

Proponents of the W76-2 point to the Cold War as evidence that the U.S. can show restraint with nuclear weapons, even when their capabilities are vast, according to the Congressional Research Service.

#### **"Escalate to de-escalate"**

This is precisely the moment the W76-2 warhead's critics and proponents pondered as it was debated. The warhead was created to counter Russia, which relies heavily on tactical, or low-yield, nuclear weapons.

"The W76-2 was sold to Congress and the public on precisely these kinds of scenarios," Kristensen said. "It was sold as a strategic, prompt response to an early first use of a tactical weapon. But it could be applied to any use." Trump's Nuclear Posture Review mentions Russia by name as the adversary driving the U.S. to add the new warhead.

The W76-2 packs a yield about one-third to one-half that of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and is not designed to be a city-destroyer, like some of its counterparts also in missiles silos, on planes and on the Bangor-based subs. Instead, its utility in the conflict in Ukraine is to respond if Russia uses a small nuke first.

It's a realistic scenario based on what U.S. intelligence knows about Moscow's nuclear doctrine, described as "escalate to de-escalate."

"Russia may also rely on threats of limited nuclear first use, or actual first use, to coerce us, our allies, and partners into terminating a conflict on terms favorable to Russia," according to the 2018 Nuclear Posture

Review. Based on Putin's doctrine, Pentagon leaders worry Russia could resort to using nuclear weapons, especially the low-yield variety, if its conventional forces fall behind in the fight.

"Potential adversaries, like Russia, believe that employment of low-yield nuclear weapons will give them an advantage over the United States and its allies and partners," John Rood, Trump's undersecretary of defense for policy, said in February 2020. The warhead provides the U.S. a quick-response option if Russia uses a nuclear weapon first, and reassures allies protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella that they're well-protected by the U.S. arsenal.

#### **A new arms race?**

But there's concern from critics of the W76-2, including Smith, that its utility in responding to a limited nuclear strike would quickly escalate into full-blown nuclear war, killing up to 100 million people across the globe almost immediately, according to some estimates, and setting the stage for widespread famine and displacement that could kill countless more.

Already, there are signs policymakers are pushing greater reliance on nuclear weapons. On Tuesday, Adm. Chas Richard, head of U.S. Strategic Command, which oversees the military side of the U.S. nuclear weapons program, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee about Russian and Chinese nuclear forces.

"We do not know the endpoints of where either of those other two are going, either in capability or capacity," he said. But he took the opportunity to endorse a controversial update of U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles that the Congressional Budget Office estimates would cost \$82 billion.

Immediately following Richard's testimony, Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., an outspoken supporter of the W76-2, tweeted: "The time has come to look at what additional nuclear capabilities we need before China and Russia leave us behind."

With Trump's proposed sea-launched cruise missile still up for debate in Congress, it remains to be seen whether Bangor might soon host another new nuclear weapon that upends existing nuclear strategy around the world.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Ukraine's International Legion of Defense</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-new-foreign-legion-takes-the-fight-to-russian-forces-11647083295">https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-new-foreign-legion-takes-the-fight-to-russian-forces-11647083295</a>
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine—Irakli Okruashvili, a former defense minister of Georgia, last week joined a Ukrainian foreign-fighter regiment created to face down the Russian invasion in a hurry. Three days later, he and a group of countrymen, former special-forces soldiers, made contact with Russian troops north of Kyiv.</p> <p>With a U.S.-supplied .50-caliber Barrett M99 single-shot anti-armor precision rifle, the Georgian unit disabled two Russian armed vehicles, Mr. Okruashvili said, before falling under a sustained reply from 152-millimeter howitzer cannons.</p> <p>After several hours, Ukrainian planes bombed the Russian artillery positions, silencing them.</p> <p>A combination of international arms and foreign volunteers has joined Ukraine's <a href="#">efforts to impede the Russian advance</a> in the third week of the conflict, and are now playing a growing role as the fighting spreads.</p> <p>"We already passed this way in 2008 when we had a war with Russia," Mr. Okruashvili said, referring to Moscow's invasion of Georgia that year. "Ukraine is not fighting only for its own freedom, its own sovereignty, its own independence. This is not the war of Ukraine only."</p> <p>Kyiv is welcoming all outside assistance. The forces at its disposal are far smaller than those of Russia and are unable to fight on an equal footing. Russia's armed forces count 900,000 personnel, compared with</p>

Ukraine's 209,000 active troops, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a London think tank. The Ukrainian number doesn't include recent mobilizations.

Addressing this imbalance, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last month [announced the formation](#) of the International Legion of Defense of Ukraine, appealing to veteran soldiers outside the country who have specialized skills and experience in war to join the fight.

The international units are a component of the country's regular armed forces and report to its general staff. Foreigners serve under Ukrainian officers. A spokesman for the group confirmed that some foreign units were already fighting on the front line.

Russia said it would consider these foreign fighters mercenaries. If captured, a Russian Defense Ministry spokesman said, they wouldn't "enjoy the status of prisoners of war" under the Geneva Conventions.

The U.S., like many other countries, discourages its citizens from going to fight in Ukraine, as that could have legal and security ramifications. U.K. Foreign Secretary Liz Truss this week withdrew her support for British nationals going to Ukraine to fight after earlier saying she would back them if they wanted to join the struggle. Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly has said her government understood that people of Ukrainian descent would want to help defend their motherland and that doing so would be up to them.

Kyiv said 20,000 foreigners had enlisted in the International Legion and that there were nearly 13 million visits to the group's website in its first 24 hours. The Wall Street Journal couldn't independently verify these figures.

The group is seeking veterans with combat experience, and a number of Americans and British citizens who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have already registered, the spokesman said.

Ukrainian diplomatic missions abroad have been funneling recruits via Poland, and volunteers have been arriving there from Belarus, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and dozens of other countries, according to an official at the Ukrainian Embassy in Warsaw.

On Friday, more foreign volunteers were at Przemyśl train station on the Polish border, preparing to cross over to fight with Ukrainian forces, either with the International Legion or informal groups of fighters. Many carried camouflage backpacks and were speaking English rather than the mix of Slavic languages usually heard there.

A 30-year-old American veteran from Massachusetts said he wanted to help the Ukrainian cause however he could. "I served a tour in Afghanistan," he said. "I feel like I have decent tools to help these people get out of harm's way. I have medical skills as well. Anything I can do to help them."

Matyas Kotyk, 32 years old, said he had served a year in the Czech Republic's military in 2010. He was also heading into Ukraine, carrying with him only a small backpack. Now a private security guard, he hadn't told his parents or 4-year-old daughter at home where he was headed.

"I couldn't just stay home and watch it," he said, adding that he had never been in a firefight and didn't have any military gear except a tactical vest. "I'm nervous, a little bit."

Foreigners have been fighting in Donbas, [in Ukraine's east](#), during the eight years of war that preceded Russia's wider invasion of the country last month, with mixed results. The Justice Department has probed the alleged role of several Americans in Donbas war crimes.

One of them, Craig Lang, has been charged with murder conspiracy in relation to a 2018 double homicide in Florida and is fighting extradition to the U.S. Mr. Lang has said he is innocent.

With the International Legion, Kyiv is attempting to get a stronger grip on the flow of volunteers who are typically drawn to war, formalizing the participation of foreign combatants and directing veterans with valued skills and battle experience to areas Ukraine most needs them.

For now, the legion is giving priority to the creation of infantry units, assigning foreign fighters based on their individual skills, the spokesman said.

Some foreigners have come to Ukraine and judged the International Legion to be more an exercise in publicity than an effective force and instead joined informal fighting brigades or the Ukrainian territorial defense, a formal citizen militia.

Volunteers who join the International Legion are required to sign a contract binding them to military service for the war's duration, which can qualify them for Ukrainian citizenship, a senior Ukrainian official said Wednesday.

Matthew Parker, a U.S. Army veteran and private investigator in South Carolina, has been assisting the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington, D.C., by vetting Americans who hoped to enlist.

He has cleared a group of 10 veterans, most of whom have more than a decade of military experience and were deployed in Afghanistan or Iraq, he said.

Mr. Parker said his group included drone operators, satellite-communication experts and men who knew how to use Javelin antitank weapons and Stinger ground-to-air missiles, arms that the U.S. and other Western countries have been delivering to Ukraine in great numbers recently.

Mr. Parker said his Ukrainian contacts hadn't explained how they would utilize his group and that he feared the men would be sent with little forethought toward Russian guns or assigned menial tasks.

"We have specialties," he said. "Don't waste my people's time by giving them a rifle and telling them to guard a bridge."

Other volunteers have found their way to a prearranged collection point, a gas station one mile from the Polish border near the western Ukrainian city of Lviv. One morning last week, Bekim Zeqiri, a 27-year-old U.S. Army veteran from Westhampton, N.Y., mixed there with other volunteers, wearing a New York Yankees ball cap and a shaggy dark beard.

Other foreigners arrived. A tall man in dark glasses said he was from Venezuela. Two other men had colorful neck and facial tattoos. Ukrainian soldiers in camouflage uniforms led the men toward a bus.

"This is my adrenaline," Mr. Zeqiri said. "This is my chance to play high-school football again."

It wasn't quite what he expected.

At a nearby barracks, military evaluators placed Mr. Zeqiri in a group for rapid deployment, and he received a Ukrainian military uniform, a sleeping bag, a flak jacket and helmet, an AK-74 semiautomatic rifle and 120 rounds of ammunition, he said later in a text message.

The next day, already in Kyiv, he said he was disappointed not to receive advanced American weapons. He was also concerned about a convoy of Russian tanks and troops that he heard was advancing southward on the capital.

"Seriously, dude, it's not what I thought it was," Mr. Zeqiri said. "Where's my M4? Where's my Javelin?"

He said he missed rapping in nightclubs and that he would prefer to go back to doing that.

"Bro, they telling us, you know, that we got this s—," he said. "Bro, I don't think that we got this s—."



	A day later, as the sun rose, Mr. Zeqiri arrived in Lviv by bus and caught a cab toward the border. In a final text message, he wrote, “Poland.”
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Russia: arms shipments ‘legitimate targets’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/arms-shipments-are-a-legitimate-military-target-kremlin-warns-west">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/arms-shipments-are-a-legitimate-military-target-kremlin-warns-west</a>
GIST	<p>Russia has said it will treat arms shipments to Ukraine from Nato countries as <a href="#">“legitimate targets”</a> for military action in a dangerous new escalation of tensions.</p> <p>The warning from the deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, came as supporters of <a href="#">Ukraine</a>, including the UK, Germany and the United States, have been urgently shipping thousands of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles to Kyiv in response to Moscow’s aggression.</p> <p>Ryabkov said that <a href="#">Russia</a> had “warned the US that pumping weapons from a number of countries it orchestrates isn’t just a dangerous move, it’s an action that makes those convoys legitimate targets”.</p> <p>Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the Ukrainian president, disclosed that at least 1,300 of his country’s troops have been killed in the conflict so far in the first estimate of Ukraine’s combat losses after almost three weeks of fighting. Ukraine has claimed to have killed some <a href="#">12,000 Russian troops</a>.</p> <p>Heavy fighting continued across Ukraine. The French president Emmanuel Macron and German chancellor Olaf Scholz reported that Vladimir Putin <a href="#">showed no willingness</a> to end the war after a phone call between the leaders in which they renewed a call for a ceasefire and negotiations. A statement from the office of the French president described the conversation with the Russian leader as “very frank and also difficult”.</p> <p>Russian forces continued to pulverise the besieged port city of Mariupol, shelling a mosque sheltering more than 80 people, including children, the Ukrainian government said on Saturday, while fighting also raged on the outskirts of Kyiv.</p> <p>In several areas around the capital artillery barrages sent residents scurrying for shelter and air raid sirens wailed. Britain’s Ministry of Defence said that Russian ground forces massed north of Kyiv had now edged to within 15 miles of the city centre as their attempt to encircle it ground on.</p> <p>Columns of smoke were seen rising over the southwest of the city after a strike on an ammunition depot in the town of Vasylikiv.</p> <p>In the south, Ukraine’s military said that Russian forces captured Mariupol’s eastern outskirts, tightening the armed squeeze on the strategic port. Taking Mariupol and other ports on the Azov Sea could allow Russia to establish a land corridor to Crimea, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014.</p> <p>Zelenskiy encouraged his people to keep up their resistance, which many analysts said has prevented the rapid offensive and military victory the Kremlin had expected. “The fact that the whole Ukrainian people resist these invaders has already gone down in history, but we do not have the right to let up our defence, no matter how difficult it may be for us,” he said.</p> <p>He accused Russia of employing “a new stage of terror” with the apparent kidnapping of the mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Fedorov, who was last seen being led away from his office on Friday by armed men, prompting a demonstration in the city.</p> <p>Zelenskiy added that Russia would need to carpet-bomb the Ukrainian capital and kill its residents to take the city. “They will come here only if they kill us all,” he said. “If that is their goal, let them come.”</p>

In a bleak coda that spoke of the continuing levels of destruction, Zelenskiy added that some small Ukrainian towns had ceased to exist.

Despite crippling economic sanctions imposed on Moscow and international isolation, Putin – who has imposed his own draconian crackdown on media freedom and free speech in Russia – has given no indication of being swayed to end the war.

In his 90-minute call with Macron and Scholz on Saturday, Putin spoke about “issues related to agreements under discussion to implement the Russian demands” for ending the war, the Kremlin said without providing details. Among other things, the Kremlin has previously demanded a promise by Nato never to accept Ukraine as a member and for the alliance to pull back from countries such as Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.

Ukrainian officials continued efforts to evacuate besieged cities, including the capital, as well as towns and villages in the regions of Kyiv, Sumy and some other areas.

The governor of the Kyiv region Oleksiy Kuleba said fighting and threats of Russian air attacks were continuing yesterday morning but later said some evacuations were proceeding. “We will try to get people out every day, as long as it’s possible to observe a ceasefire,” he said.

The governor of the Russian-controlled territory of Donetsk said constant shelling was complicating bringing aid into Mariupol.

“There are reports of looting and violent confrontations among civilians over what little basic supplies remain in the city,” the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said. “Medicines for life-threatening illnesses are quickly running out, hospitals are only partially functioning, and the food and water are in short supply.”

People were boiling ground water for drinking, using wood to cook food and burying dead bodies near where they lay, a staff member for the international group Médecins Sans Frontières in the city said.

“We saw people who died because of lack of medication,” he said, adding that many people had also been wounded or killed. “Neighbours just dig a hole in the ground and put the dead bodies inside.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 ICE massive drop arrests, deportations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/11/ice-announces-massive-drops-arrests-deportations/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/11/ice-announces-massive-drops-arrests-deportations/</a>
GIST	<p>The Biden administration slashed interior immigration arrests by about half compared to the Trump years, according to an overdue report released Friday that details the massive changes at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.</p> <p>ICE said it made 74,082 arrests in fiscal year 2021, down from more than 103,000 the previous year and more than 143,000 in 2019.</p> <p>Actual deportations also plummeted to 59,011. Under former President Barack Obama, those numbers topped 400,000 in some years, and under former President Donald Trump, they topped 300,000 in some years. Deportations of gang members dipped by more than 50% compared to the middle of the Trump years.</p> <p>Agency officials, briefing reporters, said they hadn’t looked to see if 2021 marked the worst numbers ever, but they said they were pleased with the results of their new policy of disregarding most illegal immigrants in favor of “priority” targets.</p> <p>“We are focusing on what we consider quality arrests,” a senior ICE official said.</p>

As an example, the official said that arrests and removals of documented aggravated felons are at their highest level ever. Under the Biden administration, they tallied 937 aggravated felon deportations a month, compared to 633 a month during the Trump years.

Analysts say that data could be misleading. In past years, officers could make arrests of people without documenting that they were aggravated felons, so they may have been arresting aggravated felons without actually flagging them as such, according to Jessica Vaughan, policy studies director at the Center for Immigration Studies.

The report lacks some key metrics that had been in previous years' reports. There is no mention, for example, of how many "detainer" deportation requests ICE lodged with other law enforcement agencies.

The 33-page report covers ICE's deportation operations, its Homeland Security Investigations division, its legal branch and its internal affairs division.

The deportation operations section is seven pages. By contrast in 2020 — the last full year under the Trump administration — the report on deportation operations was 32 pages in length.

The new report does, however, include stats on diversity training and a 26% drop in formal diversity complaints lodged within the agency.

In 2021, 34 known or suspected terrorists were ousted, ICE reported. That's up from 31 in 2020 but far fewer than the 58 deported in 2019.

Of the 59,011 deportations ICE recorded last year, it says 66% of them had criminal convictions — up from 56% the year before.

But just 2,718 of the deportees were known or suspected gang members. That's down dramatically from the 4,276 gang members ousted in 2020, and nearly 5,500 ousted in 2019.

ICE cheered the lower numbers and more relaxed policies, saying they reflect a more focused agency. Among those changes was ending longer-term detention of families, who are now being caught and released, and shutting down two contract detention facilities that immigrant-rights activists had complained about.

But the biggest changes came in orders from on high about which immigrants should be targeted for arrest. From February to September, the end of the fiscal year, ICE was operating under rules issued by acting Director Tae Johnson that pushed officers to only arrest people deemed national security risks or aggravated felons.

Mr. Johnson said the numbers show that approach.

"As the annual report's data reflects, ICE's officers and special agents focused on cases that delivered the greatest law enforcement impact in communities across the country while upholding our values as a nation," he said in a statement.

Friday's report covered fiscal year 2021, which ran from Oct. 1, 2020, to Sept. 30, 2021. ICE usually releases the report by the end of the calendar year.

This year's report took far longer, and the delay even drew a rebuke from Congress.

Lawmakers put language in a report attached to the new government-wide spending bill approved this week directing ICE to release the annual operations numbers on time.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/11/fbi-audit-reveals-agents-rule-breaking-investigati/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/11/fbi-audit-reveals-agents-rule-breaking-investigati/</a>
GIST	<p>FBI agents violated their own rules at least 747 times in 18 months while conducting investigations involving politicians, candidates, religious groups, the news media and others, according to a 2019 FBI audit obtained by The Washington Times.</p> <p>The internal review revealed a ratio of slightly more than two “compliance errors” per each sensitive investigative matter (SIM) reviewed by FBI auditors. These errors involved things like agents failing to get approval from senior FBI officials to start an investigation, agents failing to document a necessary legal review occurring before they opened an investigation and agents failing to tell prosecutors what they were doing, among other things.</p> <p>Cato Institute senior fellow Patrick Eddington uncovered the audit in litigation his organization brought against the FBI for access to government records. He said the audit reveals how far “off-the-chain” FBI field offices have strayed.</p> <p>“When they open investigations without authorization, to me that’s about as radical as it gets,” Mr. Eddington said.</p> <p>The FBI auditors reviewed a small portion of the bureau’s total portfolio. They studied 353 cases involving sensitive investigative matters — fewer than half of the total number of such cases — and found rules broken 747 times between Jan. 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019.</p> <p>Sensitive investigative matters are actions that may impact constitutional rights because they involve people engaged in such things as politics, governance, religious expression and the news media.</p> <p>A majority of the cases studied, 191, involved domestic public officials. Dozens of cases involved religious organizations or their prominent members and dozens of cases involving domestic political organizations and individuals. Ten cases involved domestic political candidates and 11 cases involved the news media.</p> <p>The identities of the people and groups investigated by the FBI are not revealed in the audit.</p> <p>FBI investigations have come under intense scrutiny for allegedly cutting corners in recent years, particularly stemming from its Crossfire Hurricane investigation into Trump-Russia collusion in the 2016 presidential election.</p> <p>Former FBI lawyer Kevin Clinesmith pleaded guilty in 2020 to falsifying information to justify surveillance of a former Trump campaign adviser and was sentenced to one year of probation.</p> <p>Mr. Clinesmith’s offense pre-dated the period examined in the 2019 FBI audit.</p> <p>The 2019 FBI audit said 70% of the 747 compliance errors were “related to approvals, notifications, and administrative matters.” For example, 35 full investigations and four preliminary investigations did not have the approval of an FBI special agent in charge.</p> <p>Mr. Eddington said a portion of the violations could be construed as housekeeping and bookkeeping issues, but he believes there is a lot that goes way beyond individual sloppiness.</p> <p>The FBI audit’s recommendations to correct the compliance errors are redacted in the audit.</p> <p>The FBI said it does not comment on matters involving pending litigation and refused to answer questions from The Washington Times.</p> <p>Federal lawmakers are searching for answers about the FBI’s work too. House Oversight Committee lawmakers requested on Monday a new review of the FBI’s conduct in domestic operations.</p>

Reps. Jamie Raskin, Maryland Democrat, and Nancy Mace, South Carolina Republican, wrote a letter to the Government Accountability Office requesting a review of the FBI's practice of surveilling people through assessments.

They wrote that they had concerns such assessments resulted in the "improper monitoring of protected First Amendment activity" and wanted to know if the FBI had controls to prevent violations of constitutional protections.

Other lawmakers have tried with little success to get information about the FBI's domestic operations. In December 2021, the FBI told Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Iowa Republican, that it did not need to explain its 2016 probe of the conservative group Concerned Women for America and declined to answer questions about the bureau's reasoning. The FBI revealed last year that there was nothing to pursue at Concerned Women for America after conducting an assessment.

The 2019 FBI audit does not state how many of the sensitive investigative matters lead to prosecutions or convictions.

In and around the timespan of the audit, the Justice Department and FBI repeatedly came under scrutiny for questionable investigations involving lawmakers and news reporters.

Department of Justice investigations into leaks of classified information resulted in the seizure of records of at least a dozen people connected to the House Intelligence Committee in 2017 and early 2018. Prosecutors allegedly gathered information on lawmakers, aides, and family members.

CNN said in May 2021 that the Justice Department informed its Pentagon correspondent Barbara Starr that prosecutors had obtained her phone and email records covering two months in the summer of 2017.

Attorney General Merrick Garland issued a new policy in July 2021 that "restricts the use of compulsory process" to get information from reporters gathering news.

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Click on link to view 2019 FBI audit <https://media.washtimes.com/media/misc/2022/03/11/audit.pdf>

HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Record gas prices making inflation worse</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/03/12/gas-prices-economy-inflation/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/03/12/gas-prices-economy-inflation/</a>
GIST	<p>Americans are facing sticker shock at gas stations across the country, but surging global energy costs are rippling through the economy in other ways, too: Airlines are scaling back on flights. Truckers are adding fuel surcharges. And lawn care companies and mobile dog groomers are upping their service fees.</p> <p>Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the surge in energy prices appears to be making the country's inflation problems much worse.</p> <p>"Customers really don't want to hear it, but fuel prices are going through the roof so we're having to charge more," said John Migliorini, vice president of Lakeville Trucking in Rochester, N.Y., where diesel costs have nearly doubled to about \$400,000 a month. "What choice do we have? I've never seen prices jump this high, this fast."</p> <p>The company has a fleet of 30 tractor trailers that transport general freight and food products, including groceries for the supermarket chain Wegmans. Each truck goes through about 100 gallons of diesel a day, Migliorini said.</p> <p>Record-high gas prices are seeping into everyday costs beyond the pump, adding new uncertainty to the economic recovery. Prices hit <a href="#">\$4.33</a> this week after the Biden administration took steps to ban Russian oil imports, boosting the prospect of higher short-term inflation while threatening economic growth and spending and even reshaping hiring patterns. Higher energy costs are also complicating the Federal Reserve's efforts to rein in inflation, which jumped to a new 40-year high this week.</p>

Economists say the one-two punch of rising prices and the intensifying geopolitical crisis could put the brakes on the rapid rebound. Goldman Sachs this week lowered its forecast for annual U.S. economic growth, citing "higher oil prices," and said there is a risk the United States will enter a recession in the next year.

But unlike in the 1970s, when spiking oil prices triggered a years-long downturn, the underlying strength in the U.S. labor market, combined with extra household savings and a reduced reliance on oil, could help shield the country from economic turmoil.

"The rise in energy prices will weigh on U.S. economic growth," said Peter McCrory, an economist at J.P. Morgan. "But overall we still are looking for above-trend growth for the year."

The average price for a gallon of gas jumped 13 percent this week, according to AAA. Overall gasoline prices are up 38 percent from a year ago, according to the Labor Department's latest inflation figures.

That sudden jump is creating new challenges for Dennis Coyle, who owns a landscaping business in Morris County, N.J.

"My entire business runs on gas: cars and trucks, lawn mowers, weed whackers, leaf blowers," he said. "The simple math is that if prices stay this high, my fuel costs are going to go from \$20,000 to \$40,000 this year."

Coyle, whose employees drive Ford pickups, has begun raising prices for some of his customers by \$1 or \$2 a week, though he says he's wary of driving them away.

"In my type of business, if you raise peoples' prices, they'll just go somewhere else," the 35-year-old said. "It's really hard to know what to do."

As gas prices rise, consumer spending tends to fall. Each 10 percent increase in gas and oil prices means consumers will have to spend an additional \$23 billion a year to keep up with earlier spending patterns, analysts at J.P. Morgan found. But the pandemic has also boosted Americans' bank accounts, leaving them with an additional \$2.5 trillion in savings to help cushion that blow.

"Oil price shocks tend to not have as severe of an impact on the aggregate U.S. economy as they once did, but there are still concerns — about not just energy prices, but general inflation leading to recession," said Harrison Fell, a senior research scholar at Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy. "There is still a lot of uncertainty about which way things could go."

For businesses that rely heavily on fuel, recent price jumps have already become a major sticking point. Airlines, for example, typically spend about one-third of their expenses on fuel, which means any spike in prices has a discernible impact. As a result, some international carriers are already tacking on fuel surcharges to ticket prices. Alaska Air Group is cutting back on up to 5 percent of its flights in the first half of the year as a result of "the sharp rise in fuel costs," it said in [a corporate filing](#) this week.

And though many airlines lock in lower rates by "hedging" oil prices — essentially committing for future use — major U.S. carriers including United Airlines and American Airlines do not, making them particularly susceptible to swings in energy costs. Experts say airfares, which are already ticking upward because of heightened demand and rising jet fuel costs, are likely to surge even higher in the coming months as the industry factors in the latest energy shocks.

At the same time, rising gas prices could also lead consumers to pull back on travel and retail spending. Executives at clothing chain the Children's Place said this week that "the volatility surrounding oil and gas prices and its impact on our customer" were likely to eat into sales and profits, while outstripping the benefits of last year's federal stimulus payments. Meanwhile, online retailer Overstock.com is already



paying more for ground shipping because of rising fuel costs, according to chief executive Jonathan Johnson.

“We do feel it,” Johnson said. “And we suspect — though it’s probably a little early to tell — that customers are being extra careful with how they spend their discretionary income.”

“Higher energy costs impact businesses on both sides of the equation: By raising their costs and also leaving consumers with less money to spend on other things,” said David French, senior vice president of government relations at the National Retail Federation, an industry trade group. “We’ve seen more than a dollar increase in the price of gas in the last year — and something like 60 cents this week alone — which means a lot of billions of dollars are probably not getting spent at other establishments because of gas prices.”

Beyond lifting gas prices, spikes in energy costs could reshape the mix of U.S. job openings and exacerbate labor shortages in certain industries, according to Guy Berger, principal economist at LinkedIn. Sectors like leisure and hospitality, which have been rapidly hiring back workers in recent months, could scale back if consumers start canceling travel plans because of higher prices.

On the flip side, energy and mining companies — where hiring has stalled during the pandemic — could see a resurgence of demand.

“If crude oil prices remain sky high, it’s going to reallocate job openings across sectors and geographies,” Berger said. “Up until now energy and mining have been among the least well-performing industries during covid, but that could quickly change.”

In Palestine, Texas, EasTex Solar has increased its workforce by 30 percent in the last year to keep up with demand, according to owner Cal Morton.

Demand for solar panel installations with battery storage quadrupled in early 2021 after severe winter storms left much of the state without power for days, he said. Business has remained brisk since and continues to increase week over week.

“People in Texas have a real awareness of energy prices and are starting to realize prices won’t remain cheap forever,” he said. “Many just got their highest electric bill of the year and, at the same time, they’re worried that energy prices are going to shoot up because of the war.”

Although Americans are already feeling the immediate strain of rising gas prices, it’s still too soon to determine longer-term impacts on the economy. In one scenario, elevated fuel costs could end up curbing overall spending if Americans decided to pull back in other ways.

Lydia Ibe, a mobile dog groomer in Edmond, Okla., says she is already beginning to see that dynamic play out: As she raises fees, some customers are canceling services altogether.

Ibe is charging \$10 to \$50 more per appointment to keep up with the rising cost — \$500 a week and counting — of filling up her Dodge Ram pickup truck, trailer and generator to power clippers and blow dryers.

The hit to consumption from higher energy costs may ultimately help bring inflation under control, but that’s a big if considering the uncertainty surrounding how long the war in Ukraine will last and how high oil prices will go.

“Gas prices have affected me tremendously so I have no choice but to charge more,” said Ibe, who started Splish Splash Mobile Dog Grooming six years ago. “My customers understand — of course they do, because they see what’s going on — but the ones who are retired or living on a fixed income can’t afford it anymore. I’m losing those customers.”

HEADLINE	03/12 Ukraine minister uses novel war tactics
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/technology/ukraine-minister-war-digital.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/technology/ukraine-minister-war-digital.html</a>
GIST	<p>After war began last month, President <a href="#">Volodymyr Zelensky</a> of Ukraine turned to Mykhailo Fedorov, a vice prime minister, for a key role.</p> <p>Mr. Fedorov, 31, the youngest member of Mr. Zelensky's cabinet, immediately took charge of a parallel prong of Ukraine's defense against Russia. He began a campaign to rally support from multinational businesses to sunder Russia from the world economy and to <a href="#">cut off the country from the global internet</a>, taking aim at everything from access to new iPhones and PlayStations to Western Union money transfers and PayPal.</p> <p>To achieve Russia's isolation, Mr. Fedorov, a former tech entrepreneur, used a mix of social media, cryptocurrencies and other digital tools. On Twitter and other social media, he pressured Apple, Google, Netflix, Intel, PayPal and others to stop doing business in Russia. He helped <a href="#">form a group of volunteer hackers</a> to wreak havoc on Russian websites and online services. His ministry also set up <a href="#">a cryptocurrency fund</a> that has raised more than \$60 million for the Ukrainian military.</p> <p>The work has made Mr. Fedorov one of Mr. Zelensky's most visible lieutenants, deploying technology and finance as modern weapons of war. In effect, Mr. Fedorov is creating a new playbook for military conflicts that shows how an outgunned country can use the internet, crypto, digital activism and <a href="#">frequent posts on Twitter</a> to help undercut a foreign aggressor.</p> <p>In his first in-depth interview since the invasion began on Feb. 24, Mr. Fedorov said his goal was to create a "digital blockade" and to make life so unpleasant and inconvenient for Russian citizens that they would question the war. He praised companies that had pulled out of Russia, but said Apple, Google and others could go further with steps such as completely cutting off their app stores in the country.</p> <p>A technological and business blockade, he said, "is an integral component of stopping the aggression."</p> <p>Mr. Fedorov, speaking via videoconference from an undisclosed location somewhere around Kyiv, also brushed off concerns that his actions were alienating urban Russians who might be the most likely to oppose the conflict.</p> <p>"We believe that as long as Russians are silent that they are complicit to the aggression and to the killing of our people," he said.</p> <p>Mr. Fedorov's work is not the only reason that multinational companies like Meta and <a href="#">McDonald's</a> have withdrawn from Russia, with the war's human toll provoking horror and outrage. Economic sanctions by the United States, European Union and others have played a central role in isolating Russia.</p> <p>But Peter Singer, a professor at the Center on the Future of War at Arizona State University, said Mr. Fedorov had been "incredibly effective" in calling for companies to rethink their Russia connections.</p> <p>"No celebrity, let alone nation, has ever been more effective than Ukraine at calling out corporate brands to name and shame them into acting morally," Mr. Singer said. "If there is such a thing as 'cancel culture,' the Ukrainians can claim to have honed it in war."</p> <p>In the 45-minute interview on Zoom, Mr. Fedorov, wearing a loosefitting gray fleece with black zippers, sat in front of a wood-paneled wall. He has gotten about three to four hours of sleep a night, he said, often interrupted every 30 minutes or so by alerts on the iPhone that he keeps next to his bed. He said he has been worried about his father, who has been in intensive care for the past week after a missile struck the house next door.</p> <p>"I've brushed shoulders with the horror," he said. "The war has come knocking on my door as well personally."</p>

Mr. Fedorov grew up in the small town of Vasylivka in southern Ukraine near the Dnieper River. Before going into politics, he started a digital marketing company called SMMSTUDIO that designed online advertising campaigns.

The work led him to a job in 2018 with Mr. Zelensky, then an actor who was making an unexpected run for Ukraine's presidency. Mr. Fedorov became the campaign's director of digital, using social media to portray Mr. Zelensky as a youthful symbol of change.

After [Mr. Zelensky was elected](#) in 2019, he appointed Mr. Fedorov, then 28, to be minister of digital transformation, putting him in charge of digitizing Ukrainian social services. Through a government app, people could pay speeding tickets or manage their taxes. Last year, Mr. Fedorov visited Silicon Valley to meet with leaders including Tim Cook, the chief executive of Apple.

After [Russia invaded Ukraine](#), Mr. Fedorov immediately pressured tech companies to pull out of Russia. He made the decision with Mr. Zelensky's backing, he said, and the two men speak every day.

"I think this choice is as black and white as it ever gets," Mr. Fedorov said. "It is time to take a side, either to take the side of peace or to take the side of terror and murder."

On Feb. 25, he sent letters to Apple, Google and Netflix, asking them to restrict access to their services in Russia. Less than a week later, [Apple stopped selling new iPhones](#) and other products in Russia.

The next day, Mr. Fedorov tweeted a message to Elon Musk, the founder of Tesla and SpaceX, asking for help in obtaining Starlink satellite internet systems that are made by Mr. Musk's company SpaceX. The technology could help Ukrainians stay online even if [Russia damaged the country's main telecommunications infrastructure](#). Two days after contacting Mr. Musk, a shipment of Starlink equipment arrived in Ukraine.

Since then, Mr. Fedorov said he has periodically exchanged text messages with Mr. Musk.

Mr. Fedorov also had a call last month with Karan Bhatia, a Google vice president. Google has since made several changes, including restricting access to certain Google Maps features that Mr. Fedorov said were safety risks because they could help Russian soldiers identify crowds of people. The company has since then also suspended sales of other products and services, and, on Friday blocked access to Russian state media globally on YouTube.

Mr. Fedorov has traded emails with Nick Clegg, the head of global affairs at Meta, which is the parent of Facebook and Instagram, about the unfolding war.

Apple, Google and Meta declined to comment. Mr. Musk did not respond to a request for comment.

Public shaming has been effective, Mr. Fedorov said, because companies are "emotional as well as rational in decision making."

But while many companies have halted business in Russia, more could be done, he said. Apple and Google should pull their app stores from Russia and software made by companies like SAP was also being used by scores of Russian businesses, he has noted.

In many instances, the Russian government is cutting itself off from the world, including blocking access to Twitter and Facebook. On Friday, Russian regulators said they would also [restrict access to Instagram](#) and called Meta an "extremist" organization.

Some civil society groups have questioned whether Mr. Fedorov's tactics could have unintended consequences. "Shutdowns can be used in tyranny, not in democracy," the Internet Protection Society, an internet freedom group in Russia, said in a statement earlier this week. "Any sanctions that disrupt access of Russian people to information only strengthen Putin's regime."

	<p>Mr. Fedorov said it was the only way to jolt the Russian people into action. He praised the work of Ukraine-supporting hackers who have been coordinating loosely with Ukrainian government to hit Russian targets.</p> <p>“After cruise missiles started flying over my house and over houses of many other Ukrainians, and also things started exploding, we decided to go into counter attack,” he said.</p> <p>Mr. Fedorov’s work is an example of Ukraine’s whatever-it-takes attitude against a larger Russian army, said Max Chernikov, a software engineer who is supporting the volunteer group known as the IT Army of Ukraine.</p> <p>“He acts like every Ukrainian — doing beyond his best,” he said.</p> <p>Mr. Fedorov, who has a wife and young daughter, said he remained hopeful about the war’s outcome.</p> <p>“The truth is on our side,” he added. “I’m sure we’re going to win.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Scientists: make science, not war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/science/physics-cern-russia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/science/physics-cern-russia.html</a>
GIST	<p>One of the glories of international scientific collaborations, besides sharing costs and brainpower, is the building of personal relationships that transcend individual cultures, traditions and political regimes.</p> <p>At the European Organization for Nuclear Research, or <a href="#">CERN</a>, outside Geneva, Switzerland, scientists still delight in describing the diverse array of peoples — Israelis and Iranians; Hindus, Muslims, atheists and Catholics — who worked side-by-side a decade ago to <a href="#">discover the Higgs boson</a>, the key to mass in the universe. Astronauts take pride in the brotherhood of the cosmos symbolized by ceremonial exchanges of bread and salt when <a href="#">crews arrive at the International Space Station</a>.</p> <p>These ties are now being threatened as opposition to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine continues to grow in scientific circles — even in Russia, where use of the word “invasion” in regard to Ukraine is now a crime. Conferences and academic exchanges have been canceled. Open letters from <a href="#">winners of the Nobel Prize</a> and other groups have proliferated. The Russian and American space programs, which have been intertwined for 30 years, <a href="#">now seem destined to go their separate ways</a>.</p> <p>Last week the waves of condemnation reached CERN, long an avatar of the dream of international collaboration. In a meeting of its governing body, the CERN Council, on Tuesday, the lab said it would not engage in any new collaborations with the Russian Federation “until further notice” and suspended it from its observer status at the lab.</p> <p>“CERN was established in the aftermath of World War II to bring nations and people together for the peaceful pursuit of science,” read a statement released by the council on March 8. “This aggression runs against everything for which the Organization stands.”</p> <p>This followed <a href="#">an announcement in late February</a> that the International Congress of Mathematicians, scheduled for Saint Petersburg in July, would instead be held virtually. The Congress, which occurs every four years, is the biggest gathering in math. An in-person assembly and awards ceremony will happen at a place to be determined outside Russia.</p> <p>Protests have not been confined to the West. On Feb. 24, Russian scientists and science journalists posted an open letter to the website Troitskiy Variant, an independent science publication in Russia, calling the invasion of Ukraine “unfair and frankly senseless.”</p>

“Having unleashed the war, Russia doomed itself to international isolation, to the position of a pariah country,” the letter noted. “This means that we, scientists, will no longer be able to do our job normally: After all, conducting scientific research is unthinkable without full cooperation with colleagues from other countries.”

Some 7,750 Russians have signed the letter, according to Andrei Linde, a Stanford cosmologist from Russia and one of the signatories. After the Russian parliament made it a criminal offense worth as much as 15 years in prison to call the invasion of Ukraine anything but a “special military operation,” the letter disappeared from that website, but it can still be found on the Wayback Machine.

A subsequent post, which Dr. Linde steered me to and translated, listed the signers of the letter but not the letter itself. “There is nothing criminal in the text of the letter,” the new post read. “However, due to the new legislation, which actually introduces the most severe censorship, we remove the text of the letter, leaving signatures, believing that it is important for the signatories to let people know that they have not kept silent.”

That post, too, has disappeared. “It’s so depressing,” Dr. Linde said.

Another embarrassment for Russia came when Oleg Anisimov, a climatologist at the State Hydrological Institute in Saint Petersburg who headed the Russian delegation to a Feb. 27 meeting of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [interrupted his talk before the representatives from 195 nations to apologize](#) to the citizens of Ukraine for the attack.

“Let me present an apology on behalf of all Russians who were not able to prevent this conflict,” Dr. Anisimov said at the meeting. “Those who know what is happening fail to find any justification for the attack.”

The condemnation from CERN was particularly stinging in its symbolism.

The laboratory was formed in 1954 to help bind a war-torn Europe, and the effort has been splendidly spectacular. Its [Large Hadron Collider](#) rules the roost in particle physics; the collider’s discovery of the long-sought Higgs boson a decade ago resonated globally. And the World Wide Web was invented at CERN, as a way to allow physicists to easily share their data.

In all, scientists from 100 nations and territories participate in the lab’s operations. The laboratory is governed by a council of 23 member states, each of which sends to delegates, a scientist and a diplomat, to the counsel. Each state has one vote. Russia is not a member but, like the U.S. and Japan, it has held observer status, meaning it could send delegations to meetings but not vote. Ukraine is among seven associate members. Expelling a member or observer state requires a two-thirds vote; the count is confidential.

Eliezer Rabinovici, a theoretical physicist at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem who is the president of the CERN Council, called its meeting this week “extraordinary.”

“I am overwhelmed by decisions to be taken,” he said in an email in the days before the meeting occurred.

“I think what happened now took many many by surprise,” Dr. Rabinovici recalled afterward. “They could not believe that some atrocities could happen in 21st-century Europe.” He described “some tension,” with delegates wanting “to express their sympathy and their anger” but concerned about harming the collaborative ethos of CERN in the long run.

Fabiola Gianotti, the director-general of CERN, recalled in a statement that CERN’s mission was to build bridges between countries. “In times of aggression, war and political divide,” she said, “science and the arts can play the role of keeping communication channels open. Such channels will be essential to building back when the time comes.”

The decision elicited support from a sample of physicists contacted by phone and email. “In comparison to what is going on in Ukraine, suspension of the observer status of the Russian Federation at CERN is a relatively minor issue,” Dr. Linde said.

Pierre Ramond, a physicist at the University of Florida and one of the innovators of string theory, wrote: “CERN’s decision was necessary. The lack of any would have been a black mark: CERN is more than a scientific marvel, it was and remains the first symbol of the post-WW2 new Europe.”

Kip Thorne, a physicist at the California Institute of Technology who won a Nobel Prize in 2017 for the discovery of gravitational waves, has working relationships with Russian astrophysicists that date from the 1960s.

“I believed then and I believe now that those contacts are of high importance,” he said in an email. “However, what Putin and the Russian military have done in the name of the Russian Federation is so egregious that I strongly support the CERN Council’s decision.”

What all this means for individual scientists at CERN is unclear. In a note to the lab, Dr. Gianotti insisted that nobody was being sent home and that ongoing collaborations were being maintained, at least for now.

Joseph Incandela, a physicist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who led one of the teams that discovered the Higgs boson, elaborated. “Those who are here can continue to come to the lab and do their work,” he said. “Those who come in from Russia can still get here via somewhat more circuitous flight paths if they are allowed to do so by Russian authorities. They are not restricted from entering CERN.”

However, Lisa Randall, a theoretical physicist at Harvard, noted in an email: “Given there are no flights, and presumably equipment transfers won’t happen, I am not sure about the implications of continued collaboration.”

Thus far, CERN’s plans to restart the Large Hadron Collider in April, following three years of repairs and improvements, remain on track, according to [Mike Lamont, CERN’s director for accelerators and technology](#),

So the promise of a narrow bridge of communication survives. In an email, Michael Turner, a physicist with the Kavli Foundation in Los Angeles and past president of the American Physical Society, stressed the value of these informal working relationships. “Scientists are often very influential members of their societies,” he noted, and their interactions are a reminder “of the humanity of all individuals, even those in countries whose leaders are doing outrageous things.”

“That being said,” he added, with regard to Russia’s actions, “I think the entire world is trying to figure out what to do.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Arctic security concerns resurfaces Canada</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/canada/arctic-canada-territories-russian-war.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/canada/arctic-canada-territories-russian-war.html</a>
GIST	<p>For the better part of next week, residents in Canada’s Northwest Territories may see a greater military presence and aircraft whirring about.</p> <p>It’s part of a routine training exercise by NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, a partnership between Canadian and American military forces for monitoring and alerting against aerial and marine attack.</p> <p>Any other time, the routine training would not be a cause for concern. But Russia’s war in Ukraine has drastically shifted the view that the Arctic is a “zone of peace,” a term coined by the former Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev in a speech he made two years before the end of the Cold War.</p>



Premiers in the three northern territories co-signed a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on March 2, expressing their growing concern about Arctic defense and security in light of Russia's war. The sense of alert in Canada's North has been heightened, so much so that Premier Caroline Cochrane, of the Northwest Territories, posted on Twitter to "assure residents" that the NORAD training exercise was not connected to the conflict in Ukraine.

"Interest in the Arctic has been increasing due to climate change and the opening of Arctic waters, and it's paramount Northerners are involved in decisions that impact the North," Ms. Cochrane said in an emailed statement.

Compared to its neighbors, Russia has the longest Arctic coastline and has viewed the thawing Arctic ice as an opportunity to advance its ambitions on energy security by developing northern energy sources and help its bottom line by developing shorter trade routes that would save costs on shipping cargo to the West.

At the same time, the country has undergone a steady Arctic military expansion that, in the context of war in Ukraine, has made diplomacy efforts paramount.

But as [I reported this week](#), a key forum for Arctic policy collaboration dissolved last week with the suspension of activity in the Arctic Council, the leading diplomatic organization for the region, in response to what Canada's foreign ministry has called an "unprovoked invasion" of Ukraine.

The Arctic Council, made up of eight nations, is one of at least four diplomatic organizations that have suspended their work or stopped collaboration with Russia in recent days.

Michael Byers, a professor in political science at the University of British Columbia who researches Arctic sovereignty, said that the Arctic is not monolithic and that countries in the European Arctic were more likely than Canada to be feeling a greater threat.

"The North American Arctic still has a lot of sea ice," he said. "It also has very little infrastructure and a very sparse population, and it's a long way from Russia," he added. "If I were Norwegian, I'd be watching Russia very closely right now."

The Yukon premier, Sandy Silver, said that while there was not an immediate threat to Canada's North, the landscape's physical changes, given the political shifts and the melting of polar ice as a result of climate change, bore renewed focus from the federal government.

Canadians "are so used to taking a look at a North American-specific picture of the globe," Mr. Silver told me, adding that in the Arctic region, people don't do that. "Our maps have a center piece of the North Pole, and around that you have eight nations that are all taking a look at receding glacial growth."

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HEADLINE	03/12 Russia intensifies destruction campaign
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/ukraine-russia-kyiv.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/ukraine-russia-kyiv.html</a>
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — Russian forces intensified their campaign of devastation aimed at cities and towns across Ukraine, attacking Kyiv and a strategic port on Saturday and detaining the defiant mayor of a captured city, an act that prompted hundreds of outraged Ukrainians to pour into the streets in protest.</p> <p>President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine accused Moscow of terrorizing the nation in an attempt to break the will of the people. "A war of annihilation," he called it.</p> <p>He denounced what he called the kidnapping of the mayor of Melitopol, who had refused to cooperate with Russian troops after they seized the southeastern city in the first days of the invasion, as "a new stage of terror, when they are trying to physically eliminate representatives of the legitimate local Ukrainian authorities."</p>

Russian forces have not achieved a major military victory since the first days of the invasion more than two weeks ago, and the assaults on Saturday reinforced Moscow's strategic turn toward increasingly indiscriminate shelling of civilian targets.

Unable to mount a quick takeover of the country by air, land and sea, Russian troops have deployed missiles, rockets and bombs to destroy apartment buildings, schools, factories and hospitals, increasing civilian carnage and suffering, and leading more than 2.5 million people to flee the country.

In response to American efforts to supply the Ukrainian military with antitank weapons and other matériel, Russia issued a new and more direct threat on Saturday, warning the United States that convoys with weapons sent to Ukraine would be "legitimate targets" for the Russian military.

Russia's deputy foreign minister, Sergei A. Ryabkov, said on Russian television that Moscow had warned Washington that the "thoughtless transfer of such types of weapons as portable anti-aircraft and antitank missile systems" to Ukraine could lead to serious consequences.

The heavy shelling and lack of food, water and medicine for thousands of residents in the besieged city of Mariupol have already led to what Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, called "the worst humanitarian catastrophe on the planet."

At least 1,582 civilians have died since the Russian siege of Mariupol began 12 days ago, he said, and residents are struggling to survive and have been forced to bury the dead in mass graves.

"There is no drinking water and any medication for more than one week, maybe even 10 days," a staff member who works for Doctors Without Borders in Mariupol said in an audio recording released by the organization on Saturday.

"We saw people who died because of lack of medication, and there are a lot of such people inside Mariupol," the staff member said.

During a 90-minute call with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany and President Emmanuel Macron of France urged Mr. Putin to accept an immediate cease-fire, according to the French government, which described the talks as "frank" and "difficult."

France said that Mr. Putin showed no willingness to stop the war, and said he "placed the responsibility for the conflict on Ukraine" and sounded "determined to attain his objectives."

In its summary of the call, the Kremlin said Mr. Putin had discussed "several matters relating to agreements being drafted to meet the well-known Russian demands," but did not specify those demands.

In the coming weeks, NATO, which has vowed to defend allied countries from any incursion by Russian forces, plans to gather 30,000 troops from 25 countries in Europe and North America in Norway to conduct live-fire drills and other cold-weather military exercises.

The exercises, which Norway hosts biannually, were announced more than eight months ago, NATO said, and are not linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which NATO said it was responding to with "preventive, proportionate and non-escalatory measures."

But the training has taken on greater significance as Russia steps up its bombardment of Ukrainian population centers.

Around Kyiv, the capital, Russian forces have advanced into the suburbs but have been slowed by Ukrainian troops that have counterattacked with ambushes on armored columns. On Saturday, artillery fire intensified around Kyiv, with a low rumble heard in most parts of the city.

By Saturday, there were no indications of further efforts by the Russian army to move armored columns closer to the capital. Instead, soldiers appeared to be fighting for control of the towns along the highways that encircle it.

In Irpin, a leafy bedroom community northwest of Kyiv, troops were fighting street by street, said Vitaly, a Ukrainian soldier who asked that his last name not be published for security reasons. He spoke outside a gas station minimart, its windows blown out by shelling, on the town's western edge.

"We are trying to push them back but we don't control the town," he said.

In the southern city of Mykolaiv, residents awoke on Saturday morning to the sounds of a fierce battle hours after Russian shells hit several civilian areas, damaging a cancer hospital and sending residents fleeing into bomb shelters.

The early-morning fight was concentrated in the north of the city, said Col. Sviatoslav Stetsenko of the Ukrainian Army's 59th Brigade, who was stationed near the front lines.

"They are changing their tactics," Vitaliy Kim, the governor of the Mykolaiv region, said. "They are deploying in the villages and lodging in village schools and homes. We cannot shoot back. There are no rules now. We will have to be more brutal with them."

For nearly two weeks, Russian forces have been trying to surround Mykolaiv and cross the Southern Buh River, which flows through the city and is a natural defense against a Russian push toward the west and Odessa, the Black Sea port that appears to be a prime Russian objective.

Russian forces had not crossed the river as of Saturday morning, Colonel Stetsenko said, but "they are continuing to shell Mykolaiv."

In Melitopol, hundreds of residents demonstrated in the streets, one day after Russian troops forced a hood over the mayor's head and dragged him from a government building, according to Ukrainian officials.

"Return the mayor!" the protesters shouted, according to witnesses and videos. "Free the mayor!"

But nearly as soon as the demonstrators gathered, Russian military personnel moved to shut them down, arresting a woman who they said had organized the protest, according to two witnesses and the woman's Facebook account.

The episode was part of what Ukrainian officials said was an escalating pattern of intimidation and repression. It also illustrated a problem that Russia is likely to face even if it manages to pummel cities and towns into submission: In at least some of the few cities and towns that Russia has managed to seize — mostly in the south and east — they are facing popular unrest and revolt.

Mr. Zelensky sought to tap into public rage in an address to the nation overnight.

"The whole country saw that Melitopol did not surrender to the invaders," he said. "Just as Kherson, Berdyansk and other cities where Russian troops managed to enter didn't." He said that popular resistance "will not be changed by putting pressure on mayors or kidnapping mayors."

Melitopol's mayor, Ivan Fyodorov, had remained stubbornly defiant even after Russian soldiers took over the city after a fierce assault on the first day of the invasion. "We are not cooperating with the Russians in any way," he had said.

Last weekend, with Mr. Fyodorov's encouragement, people waving Ukrainian flags took to the streets of Melitopol and other occupied cities. For the most part, Russian soldiers stood aside, even as protesters commandeered a Russian armored vehicle in one town and drove it through the streets.

	<p>While the protests in Melitopol were quickly put down, the Ukrainian government renewed efforts to bring aid to Mariupol, dispatching dozens of buses with food and medicine, Ukrainian officials said.</p> <p>Similar relief efforts had failed in recent days as fighting raged around the city and land mines pocked roads in the area. In an overnight address, Mr. Zelensky said that the inability to bring aid to the city showed that Russian troops “continue to torture our people, our Mariupol residents.”</p> <p>Still, he said, “We will try again.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/12 War arrives in Ukraine's West</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/ukraine-war-russia-west.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/ukraine-war-russia-west.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>LUTSK, Ukraine — Men in camouflage, hardened by battle, sniffled as a Ukrainian Orthodox choir sang the haunting funeral mass. One man put his arm around another as tears welled in his eyes.</p> <p>“The glory and freedom of Ukraine has not yet perished,” said the priest during the funeral rites on Saturday for two of the four soldiers who died when the city’s military airfield was bombed before dawn on Friday.</p> <p>“For 30 years we were singing these words and saying we would suffer for our freedom, but we could not have imagined these words would become our reality, that we would have to send our sons to defend us against our neighbors,” Father Mykhail, the priest said.</p> <p>The Russian invasion of Ukraine is now in its third week. With the four deaths at the airfield, it arrived in Lutsk, a provincial capital only 55 miles from Poland. It was a rare attack in the West by a Russian military that has focused primarily in the South, North and around Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv.</p> <p>For weeks, Western Ukraine has been a safe haven for millions of Ukrainians who have fled battle zones, as well as businessmen, journalists, diplomats and others. But with bombings in Lutsk and another Western city, Ivano-Frankivsk, early Friday, violence and death pierced the sense of security that many had taken for granted.</p> <p>“There is no peaceful town in Ukraine any more,” said Myroslava Kozyupa, 43, who stood outside on the town square listening as speakers broadcast the funeral taking place in the Church of the Holy Trinity in front of her.</p> <p>She acknowledged that for now they face less peril than other cities like Kharkiv, which has been under assault for two weeks, and Mariupol, the country’s most pressing humanitarian emergency, saying “we are pretty OK.” But she was distressed that Matvii, a blue-eyed, seven-month-old baby being carried by a woman next to her, “already knows what sirens are and already knows they mean we have to go to a bomb shelter.”</p> <p>Ukraine’s vast western region has stirred more concern in recent days following intermittent reports that Belarus, only 90 miles to the north, might begin to commit forces to the war. That worried Lutsk residents because of Belarus’s proximity and the unpredictability of its autocratic leader, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, an ally of Russian President Vladimir V. Putin.</p> <p>The region’s role as a corridor for weapons being delivered from Europe and the United States may also make it a target. On Saturday Russia’s deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Russian television that he had warned the United States that convoys with weapons sent to Ukraine would be “legitimate targets” for the Russian military.</p> <p>Some residents worry that in addition to the convoys, the Kremlin has its sights set on this territory.</p>

“I believe his aim is to reach the border with Poland — the NATO border,” said Serhiy, a surgeon who declined to give his last name out of fear for his security, referring to Mr. Putin.

Ms. Kozyupa said that she is worried that Ukraine could soon lose its ability to protect its airspace.

“Our borders are being defended by border guards and our land is being kept safe by our defenders, but our sky is not protected,” she said, echoing calls for NATO to establish a no-fly zone above Ukraine.

Lutsk’s airfield was bombed on Feb. 24, the first day of the invasion, but it did not completely destroy the airfield and no one was killed. The city, like much of the country’s west, had not expected Russian military activity to escalate, at least not yet. On Friday, when the attacks occurred, an early warning system did not go off because the Russian rockets had flown “super slow,” said the mayor, Ihor Polishchuk. “I think this type of attack is to raise fear, increase the level of panic and to strengthen the position of the Russian Federation in possible negotiations with Ukraine,” he said.

Mariia Zolkina, a political and military analyst at the Democratic Initiatives Foundation, said that Russia may move its troops westward, but that a full attack was still not possible — “just yet” — until Russian soldiers gain a stronger foothold in central Ukraine.

However, she predicted that Russian forces will continue attacking military targets in Ukraine’s west because even if other countries donate fighter jets, the country will not be able to use them if there are no airfields from which they can fly.

“It is important for Ukraine to receive support before Russia achieves its goals in the west,” she underlined.

Western Ukraine has a different history than the east, which has historically been closer to Russia and where more people consider themselves ethnic Russians and native Russian speakers — the people Mr. Putin has claimed are a natural part of Russia. In Lutsk, more than 90 percent of the population is composed of ethnic Ukrainians, according to the most recent census, from 2001.

Lutsk and the region of western Ukraine are now home to many displaced Ukrainians from the east and south; the population of Lutsk and its surroundings, which the mayor estimated at about 250,000, has grown by 10,000 alone. And it will play a crucial role on the corridor through which humanitarian aid will be disbursed, said Ms. Zolkina.

Lutsk’s residents have been getting ready for a potential arrival of Russian troops, whenever it may come.

“We have prepared to the max,” said Mr. Polishchuk. “We have been able to buy enough food in case of a humanitarian catastrophe. We have 40,000 cubic meters of water in our reserves. And our residents have made at least 25,000 molotov cocktails since the war began.” The mayor himself said he made “too many to count.”

A reserve battalion of 4,000 volunteers is ready to buttress both the military forces and the territorial defense, a loosely organized part of the Ukrainian Army that consists of various paramilitary groups.

Ordinary citizens are also learning what it means to live in wartime. At a basement classroom usually used as a chess club, 19-year-old Artem Kovalchuk was showing civilians how to shoot a rifle.

“Everybody wants to learn how to hold a weapon properly,” said Mr. Kovalchuk, who joined the Ukrainian army in 2020 and had been serving near Mariupol, which is now surrounded by Russian forces.

“God forbid we will soon face a similar situation as the one being experienced in eastern regions.”

	<p>At the training session, people asked questions about how far shrapnel from a grenade could fly. Then they took turns learning how to load five bullets into Kalashnikovs. The weapons are from the 1960s and '70s — too old for combat, but usable for training.</p> <p>Mr. Kovalchuk said he also gives lessons about strategy, tactics, and first aid.</p> <p>His presentation was preceded by a talk from a psychologist about relaxation techniques and coping mechanisms for dealing with panic attacks.</p> <p>The classes are every day at 1 o'clock, said Yuriy Semchuk, a volunteer, and usually draw between 150 and 200 people every day. He was previously a coordinator in a youth center, where he organized lessons in patriotic education.</p> <p>At the funeral on Saturday, the priest prayed to god for “victory over the enemy.”</p> <p>“There is a Christian commandment, ‘Thou shall not kill,” the Father Mykhail said near the end of his sermon eulogy. But the Russian attackers “deserve to die here,” he said.</p> <p>“And tomorrow we will defend our motherland so that we do not become slaves.”</p> <p>Later in the day at Holy Trinity Church, in the evening, a soldier who was defending Lutsk’s airport planned to get married — a sign that life goes on amid the looming threat of battle.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 China Covid outbreak spreads further</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/12/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine?type=stylIn-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#china-dismisses-two-mayors-and-shanghai-closes-schools-as-an-outbreak-spreads-further">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/12/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine?type=stylIn-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#china-dismisses-two-mayors-and-shanghai-closes-schools-as-an-outbreak-spreads-further</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING — Two mayors have been dismissed in northeastern China, and Shanghai has closed its school system and shifted to online instruction, as a coronavirus outbreak in mainland China gathers speed.</p> <p>China’s National Health Commission announced on Saturday that another 1,524 locally transmitted coronavirus cases had been detected in provinces across mainland China. That was up from 1,100 cases reported a day earlier, and a couple hundred cases per day a week ago.</p> <p>Though China suffered heavy loss of life when Covid-19 first emerged in the city of Wuhan more than two years ago, it has had much more success than any other large country in controlling the virus since then. The surge in cases in the past few days, fueled by the Omicron variant, still leaves China far below the daily case count of about 35,000 in the United States, which has less than a quarter of China’s population.</p> <p>The current increase in cases poses a significant challenge for China. After adopting a zero-tolerance strategy toward the virus for most of the past two years, China has shifted in recent months to a “dynamic zero” strategy. Under the new strategy, national leaders have tolerated the occasional emergence of a handful of cases in a city, provided that city leaders then quickly stamp out all further cases.</p> <p>Now the Omicron variant is proving so infectious that local leaders no longer seem able to stamp out each outbreak. The cases reported on Saturday were scattered across 20 of China’s 31 provinces.</p> <p>The mayors of Jilin City and the Jiutai district of the city of Changchun have both been dismissed, the state-run Xinhua news agency announced on Saturday, without specifying exactly when the dismissals had happened. Both places have had rapidly expanding outbreaks.</p> <p>Jilin City has an urban population of 1.8 million, while the mostly rural Jiutai district, which reported 99 new cases on Saturday morning, has 760,000 residents.</p>



	<p>Changchun, which has nine million people, was placed under partial lockdown on Friday, with each household only allowed to send out a member every other day to buy supplies. Jilin City, with over 1,000 cases in the past 10 days, has had a sustained outbreak at a local agricultural university.</p> <p>China's system for detecting and tracing infections has relied heavily on mandatory testing for anyone with a fever. Temperature checks are common at entrances to shopping malls and office complexes. Furthermore, people who try to buy fever-relieving medicine are tested for the coronavirus.</p> <p>But two-thirds of the cases reported nationwide on Saturday involved people with no symptoms, possibly because China has a nearly 90 percent vaccination rate. Infected yet asymptomatic people can spread the virus to others, but finding these people is hard, Chinese officials have said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 'Deltacron' variant rare; not novel concern</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/science/deltacron-coronavirus-variant.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/science/deltacron-coronavirus-variant.html</a>
GIST	<p>In recent days, scientists have reported that a hybrid of the Omicron and Delta coronavirus variants has been popping up in several countries in Europe. Here's what is known so far about the hybrid, which has picked up the Frankensteinian nicknames of Deltamicon or Deltacron.</p> <p><b>How was it found?</b></p> <p>In February, Scott Nguyen, a scientist with the Washington, D.C., Public Health Laboratory, was inspecting GISAID, an international <a href="#">database</a> of coronavirus genomes, when he noticed something odd.</p> <p>He found samples collected in France in January that researchers had identified as a mix of Delta and Omicron variants. In rare cases, people can be infected by two coronavirus variants at once. But when Dr. Nguyen looked closely at the data, he found hints that this conclusion was wrong.</p> <p>Instead, it looked to Dr. Nguyen as though each virus in the sample actually carried a combination of genes from the two variants. Scientists call such viruses recombinants. When Dr. Nguyen looked for the same pattern of mutations, he found more possible recombinants in the Netherlands and Denmark. "That led me to suspect that these might be real," he said in an interview.</p> <p>Dr. Nguyen shared his findings in an online <a href="#">forum</a> called cov-lineages, where scientists help one another track new variants. These collaborations are essential to double-check possible new variants: A supposed Delta-Omicron recombinant found in January in Cyprus turned out to be <a href="#">a mirage</a> resulting from faulty laboratory work.</p> <p>"There's a lot of proof that's needed to show that it is real," Dr. Nguyen said.</p> <p>It turned out that Dr. Nguyen had been right.</p> <p>"That day, we rushed to double-check what he suspected," Etienne Simon-Loriere, a virologist at the Institut Pasteur in Paris, said in an interview. "And, yeah, we quickly confirmed that it was the case."</p> <p>Since then, Dr. Simon-Loriere and his colleagues have found more samples of the recombinant virus. They eventually obtained a frozen sample from which they successfully grew new recombinants in the laboratory, which they are now studying. On March 8, the researchers posted the first genome of the recombinant on GISAID.</p> <p><b>Where has the new hybrid been found?</b></p> <p>In a March 10 update, an international database of viral sequences reported 33 samples of the new variant in France, eight in Denmark, one in Germany and one in the Netherlands.</p>

As first reported by Reuters, the genetic sequencing company Helix [found](#) two cases in the United States. Dr. Nguyen said he and his colleagues were taking a fresh look at some database sequences from the United States in an effort to find more cases.

### **Is it dangerous?**

The thought of a hybrid between Delta and Omicron might sound worrisome. But there are a number of reasons not to panic.

“This is not a novel concern,” Dr. Simon-Lorieri said.

For one thing, the recombinant is extremely rare. Although it has existed since at least January, it has not yet shown the ability to grow exponentially.

Dr. Simon-Lorieri said that the genome of the recombinant variant also suggested that it wouldn’t represent a new phase of the pandemic. The gene that encodes the virus’s surface protein — known as spike — comes almost entirely from Omicron. The rest of the genome is Delta.

The spike protein is the most important part of the virus when it comes to invading cells. It is also the main target of antibodies produced through infections and vaccines. So the defenses that people have acquired against Omicron — through infections, vaccines or both — should work just as well against the new recombinant.

“The surface of the viruses is super-similar to Omicron, so the body will recognize it as well as it recognizes Omicron,” Dr. Simon-Lorieri said.

Scientists [suspect](#) that Omicron’s distinctive spike is also partly responsible for its lower odds of causing severe disease. The variant uses it to successfully invade cells in the nose and the upper airway, but it doesn’t do so well deep in the lungs. The new recombinant may display the same penchant.

Dr. Simon-Lorieri and other researchers are conducting experiments to see how the new recombinant performs in dishes of cells. Experiments on hamsters and mice will provide more clues. But those experiments won’t yield insights for several weeks.

“It’s so fresh that we don’t have any results,” Dr. Simon-Lorieri said.

### **Where do recombinant viruses come from?**

People are sometimes infected with two versions of the coronavirus at once. For example, if you go to a crowded bar where several people are infected, you might breathe in viruses from more than one of them.

It’s possible for two viruses to invade the same cell at the same time. When that cell starts producing new viruses, the new genetic material may be mixed up, potentially producing a new, hybrid virus.

It’s probably [not uncommon](#) for coronaviruses to recombine. But most of these genetic shuffles will be evolutionary dead ends. Viruses with mixtures of genes may not fare as well as their ancestors did.

### **Are we really calling it Deltacron?**

For now, some scientists are referring to the new hybrid as the AY.4/BA.1 recombinant. That will probably change in the weeks to come.

A coalition of scientists has come up with a [system](#) for formally naming new lineages of coronaviruses. They give recombinant viruses a two-letter abbreviation starting with X. [XA](#), for example, is a hybrid that arose in December 2020 from a mixture of the Alpha variant and another lineage of coronaviruses called B.1.177.

It’s likely that Dr. Nguyen’s new recombinant will be designated XD.

	<p>But on March 8, this process became muddled when a second team of French researchers posted a <a href="#">study</a> online with their own analysis of the same recombinant. Like Dr. Simon-Lorieri and his colleagues, they isolated the virus. But in the title of their study, which has not been published yet in a scientific journal, they called it Deltamicon.</p> <p>Dr. Nguyen criticized the team for not crediting Dr. Simon-Lorieri's team for originally sharing the first recombinant virus genomes. He also criticized the scientists for unleashing lurid nicknames for the recombinant that were immediately picked up in news articles and <a href="#">social media posts</a> claiming that it was a hoax or had been produced in a lab.</p> <p>"These unconventional names are stirring a hornet's nest of conspiracy theories," Dr. Nguyen said.</p> <p>It remains to be seen how well the name XD sticks.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Russia tank line inviting target for Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/world/europe/ukraine-kyiv-russia-fighting.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/world/europe/ukraine-kyiv-russia-fighting.html</a>
GIST	<p>BROVARY, Ukraine — The column of Russian tanks rumbled along a main highway to the east of Kyiv, between two rows of houses in a small town — a vulnerable target.</p> <p>Soon, Ukrainian forces were sending artillery shells raining down on the Russian convoy, while soldiers ambushed them with anti-tank missiles, leaving a line of charred, burning tanks.</p> <p>Brovary is just eight miles from downtown Kyiv, and the skirmish on the M01 Highway on Wednesday illustrated how close Russian forces have come as they continue to tighten a noose on the nation's capital — the biggest prize of all in the war. The Russians continued on Friday to try to close in on Kyiv, with combat to the northwest and east that consisted mostly of fierce, seesaw battles for control of small towns and roads.</p> <p>But the attack by Ukrainian troops in Brovary also cast into sharp relief the strategic challenges — and, military analysts say, the strategic missteps — that have bedeviled Russian forces and prevented them, so far, from gaining control of most major cities.</p> <p>Though Russian forces greatly outnumber the Ukrainian army and have far superior weaponry, their size and their need to mostly use open roads make them less mobile and susceptible to attack from Ukrainian troops that can launch artillery strikes from several miles away, in tandem with surgical ambushes.</p> <p>"Urban combat is always difficult, and I don't think the Russians are any better at it than others," said Tor Bukkvol, a senior research fellow at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, a military think tank, and an authority on Russia's special forces.</p> <p>He said the Russian military was engaged in a plodding, armored advance into the urban landscape of the city's outlying towns.</p> <p>"I'm not sure there is much of a strategy at the moment," he said.</p> <p>Illia Berezenko, a Ukrainian soldier who witnessed the Ukrainian attack on the Russian armored column on Wednesday from a distant position but did not take part in it, said it aimed to hit the first and last tank in the column, in hopes of trapping those in the middle.</p> <p>From that perspective the strike, which set off fighting through a swath of villages in this area that is still ongoing, was only a partial success. In drone video of the ambush released by the Ukrainian army, which largely corresponds to Private Berezenko's account, many Russian armored vehicles can be seen driving away, apparently unharmed, while others burn.</p>

Still, Private Berezenko said that from his viewpoint as a soldier, the episode was indicative of Russian mistakes. The cluster of armored vehicles on the road was an easy target, he said. “Their artillery came first, then their tanks. The whole scenario was weird,” he said.

He said the column was moving with self-propelled artillery vehicles, which typically operate to the rear of frontline forces, mixed with tanks. Indeed, in the video released by the Ukrainian military, what appears to be a Russian Tos-1, a rocket artillery launcher nicknamed the Pinocchio for its bulging nose-like box of rockets, is seen driving amid the mayhem of exploding tanks.

“I don’t know why they are doing it,” Private Berezenko said. “Maybe they want to confuse us. Maybe they have some other understanding of what they are doing. Who knows?”

He said days of artillery shelling had dulled his nerves. “I was feeling normal” and not nervous during the skirmish, he said. “There is nothing exciting about seeing a tank,” he said. “Everybody wants to live.”

Military analysts share Ukrainian soldiers’ puzzlement over the halting Russian advances toward Kyiv so far. It might be a pause, while a new strategy is devised, said Dima Adamsky, an expert on Russian security policy at Reichman University in Israel.

On the first day of the war, the Russian military attempted a lightning raid on the capital using special forces in an elite airborne unit. These troops tried to seize an airfield north of Kyiv, in the town of Hostomel, in a helicopter assault with the apparent goal of creating a staging area for a quick attack.

But Ukrainian troops shot down a number of helicopters, sending the operation into disarray, then drove those Russians who had managed to land off the airfield and into a forest, according to Ukrainian soldiers who took part in that battle.

Russian armored columns moving toward the capital from Belarus became bogged down in unexpectedly fierce resistance. Military analysts say these circumstances left the Russian army with no good choices as it advanced toward Kyiv.

“They were convinced in the success of Plan A, that they would take Kyiv without a lot of bloodshed, but now are reverting to an older form of warfare,” said Mr. Bukkvol, of the Norwegian research center.

For the Ukrainians, he said, the strategy will be to “draw the enemy into the city,” where armored vehicles are channeled into streets, rather than spread out in fields.

This tactic was evident in the strike on the column outside of Brovary, where armored vehicles were hit as they exited the open fields and entered a stretch of highway bordered by houses, blocking any escapes.

The Ukrainians, said Private Berezenko, fired with “pretty much everything they had” including anti-tank missiles from close range and artillery from farther away. He was ordered to a fallback position and didn’t see the aftermath.

Videos posted on Ukrainian social networks showed an armored personnel carrier, peeled open by an explosion and spewing yellow flames. A Reuters videographer shot footage of Ukrainian soldiers starting up and driving away an abandoned Russian tank. It was unclear how many armored vehicles were in the column and how many were destroyed.

The drone video of the attack also cheered Ukrainian soldiers inside the city. “It was beautiful,” said one soldier manning a checkpoint, who declined to be identified. “We just poured it onto them.” The video showed plumes of black smoke and dust bursting on the pavement and a tank apparently trying, awkwardly, to pivot on the shoulder of the road to head back the other way.

Driving out of Kyiv to the east, the high-rises of the city center give way to malls, gas stations and furniture stores, then a forest and a few miles away the suburban community of Brovary.

	<p>While the strike forced the Russian column to retreat, days of fighting ensued in the villages east of here. And it was not without Ukrainian casualties.</p> <p>In the hours and days after the strike, 20 wounded soldiers and civilians arrived at the hospital in Brovary. Volodymyr Andriets, the deputy director of the emergency room, said all had suffered concussions or wounds from shrapnel or bullets.</p> <p>They included members of a family whose car was shot at Thursday by Russian forces who had dispersed into a wooded area east of the town after Wednesday's ambush. The father, Sergei Lugina, said a bullet hit his 14-year-old daughter, Yekaterina, in the right shoulder and another blew off three fingers on his right hand. He said he managed to keep driving until he reached a Ukrainian checkpoint.</p> <p>One soldier had a gaping shrapnel wound in his right wrist but was resisting recommendations to amputate, Dr. Andriets said.</p> <p>"He understands he will lose his hand" but was still resisting, Dr. Andriets said.</p> <p>Shock was wearing off and the soldier was becoming depressed, he said. Of the successful ambush on the M01 highway east of Brovary, Dr. Andriets said, "he's not thinking of this now. Maybe later he will understand this was a victory for Ukraine."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Russia faces resistance cities, towns seized</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/melitopol-ukraine-mayor-russia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/world/europe/melitopol-ukraine-mayor-russia.html</a>
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — The mayor of Melitopol is the kind of person Russian soldiers might have believed would have welcomed them with open arms and flowers.</p> <p>Ivan Fyodorov, as his name suggests, is an ethnic Russian in a southern Ukrainian city where Russian is commonly spoken and where ties to Russia run deep.</p> <p>On Friday evening, Mr. Fyodorov had a bag thrown over his head and was dragged from a government office building by armed Russian soldiers, according to Ukrainian officials. Video filmed in Melitopol's Victory Square appears to show someone being escorted out of a government building by soldiers. The Times cannot verify the identity of the people in the video.</p> <p>Since Russian forces captured his city in the first days of the war, he had encouraged resistance, earning him the support of the public and the ire of the occupying army.</p> <p>On Saturday, hundreds of his townspeople poured out into the streets in an expression of outrage and defiance, despite the presence of troops on their streets.</p> <p>"Return the mayor!" they shouted, witnesses said and videos showed. "Free the mayor!"</p> <p>But nearly as soon as people gathered, the Russians moved to shut them down, arresting a woman who they said had organized the demonstration, according to two witnesses and <a href="#">the woman's Facebook account</a>.</p> <p>The episode is part of what Ukrainian officials say is a pattern of intimidation and repression that is growing more brutal. It also illustrates a problem that Russia is likely to face even if it manages to pummel cities and towns into submission: In at least some of the few cities and towns that Russia has managed to seize — mostly in the south and east — they are facing popular unrest and revolt.</p>

For anyone who believed the Kremlin propaganda that Russia was on a mission to save Ukraine from drug addled neo-Nazis, Melitopol was the kind of city, run by the kind of mayor, that should have viewed the Russian troops as liberators.

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said that the kidnapping of the mayor demonstrated the falsehood underlying the Russian invasion.

“For years they have been lying to themselves that people in Ukraine were supposedly waiting for Russia to come,” he said. “They did not find collaborators who would hand over the city and the power to the invaders.”

And he sought to tap into public rage in two videotaped speeches released on Saturday.

“The whole country saw that Melitopol did not surrender to the invaders,” he said. “Just as Kherson, Berdyansk and other cities where Russian troops managed to enter didn’t — temporarily managed to enter. And this will not be changed by putting pressure on mayors or kidnapping mayors.”

After people took to the streets, he praised their courage and suggested the war lacked popular support among Russians.

“Do you hear it, Moscow?” he asked. “If 2,000 people are protesting against the occupation in Melitopol, how many people should be in Moscow against the war?”

Mr. Zelensky said he had raised the fate of the mayor in calls with the leaders of Germany and France. “We expect them, the world leaders, to show how they can influence the situation,” he said. “How they can do a simple thing — free one person, a person who represents the entire Melitopol community, Ukrainians who do not give up.”

Melitopol lies only a short distance from Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014. The city came under fierce assault on the first day of the war, Feb. 24, and Russian soldiers entered only days later. While the city fell, Mr. Fyodorov remained defiant.

“We are not cooperating with the Russians in any way,” he said.

As resistance has grown more brazen, the Russian tactics have grown more brutal, according to the Ukrainian government and witnesses. The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said on Friday that Russian soldiers were committing robberies, taking hostages and executing civilians. The reports of executions and hostage taking could not be independently verified, but there have been multiple witness accounts, often recorded on video, of Russian soldiers looting stores and homes.

Mr. Zelensky said the kidnapping of the mayor was part of a broader shift in tactics. “They have switched to a new stage of terror, when they are trying to physically eliminate representatives of the legitimate local Ukrainian authorities,” he said.

Last weekend, people waving the blue and gold of the Ukrainian flag took to the streets of Melitopol and other occupied cities.

For the most part, Russian soldiers stood aside, even as protesters commandeered a Russian armored vehicle in one town and drove it through the streets.

Mr. Fyodorov encouraged the demonstration. In his most recent post on Facebook, he thanked business leaders who were helping the community in the moment of strife. “Together we will overcome anything!” [he wrote](#).

His location is now unknown.



HEADLINE	03/12 Ukraine war ushers 'new era' for US abroad
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/us/politics/biden-ukraine-diplomacy.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/us/politics/biden-ukraine-diplomacy.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The <a href="#">war in Ukraine</a> has prompted the biggest rethinking of American foreign policy since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, infusing the United States with a new sense of mission and changing its strategic calculus with allies and adversaries alike.</p> <p>The Russian invasion has bonded America to Europe more tightly than at any time since the Cold War and deepened U.S. ties with Asian allies, while forcing a reassessment of rivals like China, Iran and Venezuela.</p> <p>And it has re-energized Washington's leadership role in the democratic world just months after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan ended 20 years of conflict on a dismal note.</p> <p>But the new focus on Russia will come with hard choices and internal contradictions, similar to ones that defined U.S. diplomacy during the Cold War, when America sometimes overlooked human rights abuses and propped up dictators in the name of the struggle against communism.</p> <p>"It feels like we're definitively in a new era," said Benjamin J. Rhodes, a former deputy national security adviser in the Obama White House. "The post-9/11 war on terror period of American hubris, and decline, is now behind us. And we're not sure what's next."</p> <p>The attack by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on his neighbor has become a prism through which nearly all American foreign policy decisions will be cast for the foreseeable future, experts and officials said.</p> <p>In recent weeks, Western officials have spoken in terms that often echo the grand declarations that followed the 2001 terrorist attacks. On Friday, President Biden said that "the free world is coming together" to stand up to Mr. Putin — a phrase reminiscent of President George W. Bush's talk of how "the entire free world" was at war against terrorism.</p> <p>In the near term, Russia's aggression is sure to invigorate Mr. Biden's global fight for democracy against autocracies like Moscow, making vivid the threats to fledgling democracies like Ukraine. Yet three increasingly authoritarian NATO nations — Poland, Hungary and Turkey — play key roles in the coalition <a href="#">aiding Kyiv</a>. And the United States is grappling with <a href="#">internal assaults to its own democracy</a>.</p> <p>The war lends urgency to Mr. Biden's climate change agenda, reinforcing the need for more reliance on renewable clean energy over the fossil fuels that fill Russian coffers. Yet it has already generated new pressure to increase the short-term supply of oil from the likes of Venezuela's isolated dictatorship and Saudi Arabia's authoritarian monarchy.</p> <p>And it creates a powerful new incentive for the United States <a href="#">to find ways of prying</a> President Xi Jinping of China away from Mr. Putin, who is likely counting on diplomatic and economic lifelines from Mr. Xi amid crushing Western sanctions. But some administration officials see China as a lost cause and prefer to treat China and Russia as committed partners, hoping that might galvanize policies among Asian and European allies to contain them both.</p> <p>While some experts warn that a renewed focus on Europe will inevitably divert attention from Asia, several top White House officials say the United States can capitalize on how the war has convinced some Asian governments that they need to work more closely with the West to build up a global ideological front to defend democracy.</p> <p>"What we are seeing now is an unprecedented level of Asian interest and focus," Kurt M. Campbell, the top White House official on Asia policy, said <a href="#">at a talk</a> hosted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States.</p>

“And I believe one of the outcomes of this tragedy will be a kind of new thinking around how to solidify institutional connections beyond what we’ve already seen between Europe and the Pacific,” he said.

America’s approach to the world was already undergoing a major shift, with the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq concluded, and conversations over Islamist terrorism no longer at the fore. Many war-weary Americans welcomed calls for a reduced military footprint overseas by President Donald J. Trump, who questioned NATO’s relevance and even flirted with [withdrawing from the alliance](#).

Mr. Biden sought to rebuild American alliances, but did so largely in the name of confronting China. The Russian invasion has expanded his mission dramatically and urgently, setting the stage for a seismic geopolitical shift that would pit the United States and its allies [against China and Russia at once](#) if they form an entrenched anti-Western bloc.

But it also gives Washington a new and nobler sense of purpose, Mr. Rhodes said. “We’ve been trying to get to a new era for a long time,” he said. “And now I think Putin’s invasion has necessitated an American return to the moral high ground.”

### **Playing Hardball Over Energy**

Early signs of how the new American priorities are creating diplomatic quakes have already emerged.

On Friday, the United States and its European allies agreed [to pause talks with Iran](#) that just days earlier seemed on the verge of clinching a return to the 2015 deal that limited Iran’s nuclear program. Western nations are refusing a demand by Moscow, which is a party to the Obama-era agreement from which Mr. Trump withdrew, for guarantees that its future transactions with Iran be exempted from the sanctions imposed on Russia in recent weeks.

“It’s been clear since last weekend that negotiations to revive the Iran deal could not be walled off from the Ukraine war,” Dalia Dassa Kaye, an Iran expert at the RAND Corporation, said on Friday.

Last year, Mr. Biden made a new agreement a core goal of his foreign policy. It is unclear whether one can be struck without Russia, which is a member of the commission that both supervises compliance with the deal and would take control of Iran’s excess enriched uranium.

The United States is also looking at Venezuela from a new angle. Senior Biden administration officials traveled to Venezuela two weeks after the Russian invasion, becoming the first to visit the country in years. Venezuela, a partner of Russia, is under heavy [U.S. sanctions](#) imposed years ago to weaken the repressive government of President Nicolás Maduro. In 2019, the Trump administration imposed additional sanctions on the [state oil company](#), central bank and senior officials to pressure Mr. Maduro to step down.

Now, with Mr. Biden looking to increase global oil supplies to bring down prices, U.S. officials are talking to Mr. Maduro’s government about [buying his oil again](#). The idea has drawn some sharp criticism in Congress, however, where Senator Bob Menendez, Democrat of New Jersey and the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, [fumed that](#) “efforts to unify the entire world against a murderous tyrant in Moscow should not be undercut by propping up a dictator under investigation for crimes against humanity in Caracas.”

The same imperative on oil is reshaping U.S. diplomacy with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, two Persian Gulf nations that some Biden administration officials view with suspicion or hostility because of their autocratic systems and leading roles in [a war in Yemen](#) that has resulted in a [humanitarian catastrophe](#). Brett McGurk and Amos J. Hochstein, two senior administration officials, traveled to the Gulf days before the Russian invasion to discuss security and energy issues.

However, Saudi Arabia has declined so far to increase oil production, while the United Arab Emirates waited until Wednesday to ask the OPEC nations to do so. American officials were also furious with the

U.A.E. for [declining to vote](#) on a United Nations Security Council resolution to condemn Russia, though it did support a similar resolution later in the U.N. General Assembly.

The unreliability of the two nations and Russia's place in the oil economy have increased momentum within the Biden administration to enact policies that would help the United States more quickly wean itself off fossil fuels and confront the climate crisis. This could lead future administrations to devote fewer diplomatic and military resources to the Gulf nations in the long term, even if U.S. officials want them to help on oil now.

"We may see more fundamental questioning about the value of these partnerships," Ms. Kaye said. "These states already believe the U.S. has checked out of the region, but their stance on Russia may only strengthen voices calling for a further reduction of U.S. forces in the region."

Israel, the closest U.S. ally in the Middle East, has also [staked out a neutral position](#) on the Ukraine war, largely because of Russia's [presence in the region](#). But American officials have been more forgiving of Israel's stance as Prime Minister Naftali Bennett conducts [shuttle diplomacy](#). He met with Mr. Putin for three hours in Moscow on March 5 and then spoke with Volodymyr Zelensky, the president of Ukraine, by phone before returning home. U.S. officials say Mr. Bennett consulted with them about the talks, and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said this past week that they "appreciate the efforts."

### **Juggling Allies in Europe and Asia**

In Europe, Russia's invasion has supercharged the Biden administration's efforts to restore the morale of a NATO alliance that Mr. Trump undermined.

But the alliance includes three nations — Poland, Hungary and Turkey — whose democratic backsliding has troubled the Biden administration. Hungary and Turkey were pointedly excluded from Mr. Biden's [global democracy summit](#) in December, and the European Union has [cut billions of euros of funding](#) to Poland and Hungary for what it sees as erosions of legal and democratic principles. Now all three countries [are participating](#) in the coalition against Russia.

"In times of crisis, there is sometimes a tension between our values and our interests," said Andrea Kendall-Taylor, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. "In the short term, we're going to have to prioritize pushing back against Russia, at the risk of taking our foot off the gas on the democracy and human rights concerns that had been at the front and center of the Biden administration's agenda."

In Asia-Pacific region, several important U.S. partners and allies are working with Washington on sanctions and export controls on technology against Russia. These include Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Australia. Some Asian nations have agreed to long-term gas swaps with Europe to help relieve a potential Russian shut-off of energy exports. And Australia has committed to [spending \\$50 million](#) to send weapons to Ukraine, including missiles and ammunition.

However, India — the most populous U.S. ally in the so-called [Quad coalition](#) of democracies in Asia — has refrained from condemning Russia's invasion because of decades-old security ties with Moscow. That stance undermines Mr. Biden's insistence that democratic nations band together against autocracies.

But it is the other Asian behemoth, China, that presents the biggest diplomatic challenge for the United States. China is Russia's most powerful partner, and their bond [has strengthened](#) in recent years. Even as the Russian military decimates Ukrainian cities and kills hundreds or thousands of civilians, China has signaled that it stands by Moscow by issuing anti-U.S. declarations and [amplifying the Kremlin's propaganda and conspiracy theories](#).

Mr. Xi's [persistent support](#) of Mr. Putin, with whom he [shares a drive](#) to dilute American power, has made administration officials wonder whether there is any way to [pull them apart on Ukraine](#).

	<p>On Thursday, William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, told U.S. senators he believed that Mr. Xi was “unsettled” by the war. Some China analysts say that if Beijing wants to salvage its reputation with Western nations, particularly in Europe, it might agree to take steps to help Ukraine without directly breaking from Russia.</p> <p>Ryan Hass, a China director on the National Security Council in the Obama White House, proposed <a href="#">testing Beijing</a> with specific requests, such as asking them to provide more humanitarian aid and refrain from recognizing Russian-installed governments in Ukraine or shielding Russia from war crimes investigations.</p> <p>“If China’s leaders take concrete actions to relieve suffering,” he said, “then lives would be saved and there would be less centrifugal pressure toward cleaving the world into rival blocs.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Inevitable? Russia’s war on Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/was-it-inevitable-a-short-history-of-russias-war-on-ukraine">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/was-it-inevitable-a-short-history-of-russias-war-on-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>For three months everyone argued about whether there would be a war, whether Vladimir Putin was bluffing or serious. Some of the Russia experts who had long told people to take it easy were now telling people to get worried. Others, who had long criticised Putin, said that he was just trying to draw attention to himself, that it was all for show. Among the analysts, there was a debate between the troop watchers and the TV watchers. The troop watchers saw the massive concentration of Russian forces at the border and in Crimea and warned of invasion. The TV watchers said that Russian TV was not ramping up war hysteria, as it usually does before a Russian invasion, and that this meant there would be no war.</p> <p>The question was settled, for ever, on the night of 24 February, when Russian missiles hit military installations and civilian targets inside Ukraine, and Russian armoured convoys crossed the border. Then everyone began arguing about why. Was Putin crazy? Was he genuinely concerned about Nato expansion? Was he thinking in amoral categories – as longtime Putin scholar Fiona Hill suggested – that were fundamentally historical, along timescales that made no sense to ordinary mortals? Was he trying, bit by bit, to reconstruct the Russian Empire? Was Estonia next?</p> <p>I had travelled to Moscow in January to see what I could learn. The city looked beautiful. Snow lay on the ground and everyone was very calm. Yes, repressions were ramping up, the space for political expression was narrowing, and many more people had died of Covid-19 than was officially acknowledged. And yes, speaking of Covid, Putin was paranoid about it, forcing anyone who wanted to see him in person to quarantine for one week in advance in a hotel the Kremlin had for that purpose. No one thought things were going in anything like the right direction, but none of the people I spoke to, some of them fairly well connected, thought an invasion was actually going to happen.</p> <p>They thought Putin was engaged in coercive diplomacy. They thought the American intelligence community had lost its mind. I visited friends, listened to their reflections, gamed out the various scenarios. Even if an invasion did happen – a big if – it would be over quickly, we all agreed. It would be like Crimea: a precision operation, the use of overwhelming technological superiority. Putin had always been so cautious – the sort of person who never started a fight he wasn’t sure to win. It would be terrible, but relatively painless. That was wrong. We were all wrong.</p> <p>That everyone was wrong did not prevent everyone from immediately claiming that, in fact, they’d been right. <a href="#">Russia</a> experts who had been arguing for years that Putin was a bloody tyrant rushed forth to claim vindication, for he had undoubtedly become what they had claimed he was all along. Russia experts who had been arguing for years that we needed to heed Putin’s warnings could also claim vindication (though more quietly) because Putin had finally acted on those warnings. As usual, officials from US presidential administrations of yore were trotted out on TV as talking heads, dispensing their wisdom and accepting no responsibility, as if they had not all contributed, in one way or another, to the catastrophe.</p>

This war was not inevitable, but we have been moving toward it for years: the west, and Russia, and Ukraine. The war itself is not new – it began, as Ukrainians have frequently reminded us in the past two weeks, with the Russian incursion in 2014. But the roots go back even further. We are still experiencing the death throes of the Soviet empire. We are reaping, too, in the west, the fruits of our failed policies in the region after the Soviet collapse.

This war was the decision of one person and one person only – Vladimir Putin. He made the call in his Covid isolation, failed to mount any sort of campaign to garner public support, and barely spoke to anyone outside the tiniest inner circle about it, which is why just a few weeks before the invasion no one in Moscow thought it was going to happen. Furthermore, he clearly misunderstood the nature of the political situation in Ukraine, and the vehemence of the resistance he would encounter. Nonetheless, to understand the tragedy of the war, and what it means for Ukraine and Russia and the rest of us, it is worth going back beyond the last few weeks and months, and even beyond Vladimir Putin. Things did not have to turn out this way, though where exactly we went wrong is much harder to determine.

## **1. The breakup: Russia and Ukraine after the fall of the USSR**

Thirty years ago, as the countries of the former Soviet Union declared their independence, everyone breathed a sigh of relief that the empire disappeared so gently. Aside from a nasty irredentist conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the ethnic Armenian exclave of [Nagorno-Karabakh](#), there was very little violence. But gradually, almost imperceptibly, conflict began appearing at the edges of the former USSR.

In Moldova, Russian troops supported a small separatist movement of Russian-speakers that eventually formed the tiny breakaway republic of [Transnistria](#). In Georgia, the autonomous region of [Abkhazia](#), also supported by Russian arms, fought a short war with the central government in Tbilisi, as did South Ossetia. [Chechnya](#), a Russian republic that had fiercely resisted the encroachment of the empire throughout the 19th century, and which suffered terribly under Soviet rule, declared its own wish for independence, and was ground down in not one but two brutal wars. Tajikistan endured a civil war, in part a fallout from the civil war raging in Afghanistan, with which it shared a border. And on and on. In 2007, Russia launched a [cyber-attack](#) against Estonia, and in 2008, it responded to an attempt by Georgia to retake [South Ossetia](#) with a massive counter-offensive. Despite all this, it was still common for people to say that the dissolution of the Soviet Union had been miraculously peaceful. And then came Ukraine.

In the laboratory of nation-building that was the former empire, Ukraine stood out. Some of the Soviet former republics had longstanding political traditions and distinct linguistic, religious and cultural practices; others less so. The Baltic states had each been independent for two decades between the world wars. Most of the other republics had had, at best, a brief experiment with independence in the immediate wake of the collapse of tsarism in 1917. To complicate matters, many of the newfound nations had significant Russian-speaking populations who were either uninterested in or actively hostile toward their new national projects.

Ukraine was unique on all these fronts. Though it, too, had only existed as an independent state in modern times for a few short years, it had a powerful nationalist movement, a vibrant literary canon, and a strong memory of its independent place in the history of [Europe](#) before Peter the Great. It was very large – the second-largest country in Europe after Russia. It was industrialised, being a major producer of coal, steel and helicopter engines, as well as grain and sunflower seeds. It had a highly educated populace. And that populace at the time it became independent in 1991 numbered 52 million – second only to Russia among post-Soviet states. It was strategically located on the Black Sea and on the border with numerous eastern European states and future Nato members. It possessed what had once been the most beautiful beaches in the USSR, on the Crimean peninsula, where the Russian tsars had spent their summers, as well as the USSR's largest warm water naval port, in Sevastopol. It had suffered greatly during the German advance into the Soviet Union in 1941 – of the 13 “hero cities” of the USSR, so called because they saw the heaviest fighting and raised the stoutest resistance, four were in Ukraine (Kyiv, Odesa, Kerch and Sevastopol). The economies of Russia and Ukraine were deeply intertwined. Ukrainian factories in Dnipropetrovsk were a vital part of the military-industrial capacity of the USSR, and Russia's largest



export gas pipelines ran through Ukraine. Strategically, in the words of historian Dominic Lieven, describing the situation circa the first world war, Ukraine could not have been more vital. “Without Ukraine’s population, industry and agriculture, early-20th-century Russia would have ceased to be a great power.” The same was true, or seemed to be true, in 1991.

Ukraine was not just geopolitically significant to Russia. It was culturally and historically, too. The Russian and Ukrainian languages had diverged sometime in the 13th century, and Ukraine had a distinct and notable literature, but the two remained close – about as close as Spanish and Portuguese. While most of the country was ethnically Ukrainian, there was, particularly in the east, a large ethnic Russian minority. Perhaps more important, while the official language was Ukrainian, the lingua franca in most of the large cities was Russian. And perhaps even more important than that, most people knew both languages. It was common on television to see a journalist, for example, ask a question in Russian and receive an answer in Ukrainian, or to have a panel of experts for a talent show with two Russian-language judges and two Ukrainian-language judges. It was a genuinely bilingual nation – a rare thing.

From a Russian nationalist perspective, that was a problem. Why speak two languages when you could just speak one? Crimea was a particularly sore spot: the vast majority of the population identified as Russian. And once you started thinking about Crimea, you then started thinking about eastern Ukraine. There were many Russians there. To be sure, there were also Russians in other places – in northern Kazakhstan, for example, and eastern Estonia. There were irredentist claims on these areas as well, and occasionally they flared up. The writer turned political provocateur [Eduard Limonov](#), for example, was arrested in Moscow in 2001 for allegedly plotting to invade northern Kazakhstan and declare it an independent ethnic Russian republic. But no place held such a central part in the Russian historical imagination as Ukraine.

For the first 20 years of independence, Russia kept a very close eye on developments in Ukraine, and interfered in various ways, but that was as far as it went. That was as far as it needed to go. Ukraine’s large Russian-language population guaranteed, or seemed to guarantee, that the country would not stray too far from the Russian sphere of influence.

## **2. ‘Where does the motherland begin?’ The view from Ukraine**

In Ukraine itself, even aside from the Russian presence, there were the birth agonies of a nation. Many of the new post-Soviet countries had their share of problems – corrupt elites, restive ethnic minorities, a border with Russia. Ukraine had all this, and more. Because it was large and industrialised, there was plenty of it to steal. Because it had a major Black Sea port in the city of Odesa, there was an easily accessible seaway through which to steal it. As became clear in 2014, when it became time to use it, much of the equipment of the old Ukrainian army was smuggled out of the country through that port.

On top of this, Ukraine was, if not divided, then certainly not immediately recognisable as a unified whole. Because it had so many times been conquered and partitioned, the country’s historical memory itself was fractured. In the words of [one historian](#), “Its different parts had different pasts.” To make things worse, one of the most treasured aspects of the political culture of Ukraine, historically – the legacy of the Cossack hetmanate of the 17th century – was anarchism. The original Cossacks were warriors who had escaped serfdom. Their political system was a radical democracy. There was something beautiful about this. But in terms of the construction of a modern state, it had its drawbacks. In a now-infamous CIA analysis written shortly after the creation of independent Ukraine, it was predicted that there was a good chance the country would fall apart.

And yet, for two decades, it didn’t. For better and worse, democracy was rooted deep in Ukrainian political culture, and so while in Russia power was never transferred to an opposition, in Ukraine it happened again and again. In 1994, the first president of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, was voted out of office in favour of Leonid Kuchma, who promised better relations with Russia and to give the Russian language equal status in Ukraine. In 2004, his hand-picked successor, Viktor Yanukovich, was, after massive protests against a falsified election, voted out in favour of a more nationalist and pro-European candidate, Viktor Yushchenko. In 2010, Yushchenko proceeded to lose to a resurgent Yanukovich. But



Yanukovych was thrown out of office by the Maidan revolution in 2014. A nationalist candidate and chocolate billionaire, Petro Poroshenko, became the next president, but he was replaced by [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#), a Russian-speaking pro-peace candidate, in 2019.

Ukrainian politics were full of conflict. [Fist-fights in the Rada](#) were common and protests were a fact of ordinary life. There were massive protests against Kuchma, for example, in 2000, when a recording surfaced of him apparently ordering the murder of the journalist [Georgiy Gongadze](#), whose headless body had been found in the woods outside Kyiv. (Kuchma insisted the tapes were doctored. He was charged in 2011, but the prosecution was dropped after a court ruled the tapes inadmissible.) Yushchenko, the opposition candidate in 2004, barely survived a [dioxin poisoning](#), which had all the markings of a Russian special operation. The initial round of voting in 2004 was marked by severe irregularities and clear voter fraud such as had not yet appeared in Russia. It took mass protests, known as the Orange Revolution, to win another round of voting, in which Yushchenko won. Yushchenko himself subsequently presided over a fair election in 2010, which he lost. And on and on.

These changes of power were alternately tumultuous and pedestrian, but they reflected genuine differences of opinion among the populace about what Ukraine should be. Some thought Ukraine should integrate further with Europe, others that it should remain friendly and closely connected with Russia. The cultural and historical differences between the different parts of Ukraine would surface in times of crisis.

For Russian speakers and Ukraine's remaining Jewish population, the memory of the second world war, of resistance to Nazi invasion and occupation, remained an important touchstone. Ukrainian nationalists had a different perspective on these events. For some, the occupation of their country began in 1921 (when the Bolsheviks consolidated control of Ukraine) or 1939 (when Stalin took the last part of western Ukraine as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Germany and the USSR to carve up Poland), if not 1654, when the Cossack Hetmanate sought the protection of the Russian tsar. The famous wartime resistance fighters known as the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, who had opposed both Soviet and German occupation in western Ukraine, and who were seen as fascist villains by the Soviets, were, in the nationalist narrative, the George Washingtons of Ukrainian history. For nationalists, the signal tragedy of the 20th century was not the Nazi invasion, but instead the great famine of 1932-33, in which millions of Ukrainians died. It was known as the Holodomor – “murder by hunger” – and was consistently referred to as a deliberate act by Stalin (and by extension Russia) to destroy the Ukrainian nation.

All these arguments took place against a backdrop of economic stagnation. Ukraine's economy was consistently one of the weakest in the former Soviet bloc. Corruption was endemic and living standards were low. Ukraine [was dependent](#) on cheap gas from Russia as well as the “transit fees” it charged for Russian gas going to Europe.

To Ukrainians living under these see-sawing politics, going from hope to disappointment and back again, with what seemed like a permanent elite merely trading the presidency back and forth between themselves, it felt like their lives were passing them by. A journalist I met in Kyiv in 2010, who had taken part in the protests that were part of the Orange Revolution and was then let down by Yushchenko's presidency, lamented the missed opportunities. “All this while time is passing,” he said. He couldn't believe how little had been done since 2005, and since 1991.

But there was another aspect to time passing. The more time passed, the more Ukraine's fragile nationhood could coalesce. Because what did it mean to belong to a nation? Where, in the words of the famous Soviet song, does the motherland begin? It begins with the pictures in the first book your mother reads you, according to the song. And to your good and true friends from the courtyard next door. The more people who were born in Ukraine, rather than the USSR, the more people grew up thinking of Kyiv as their capital instead of Moscow, and the more they learned the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian history, the stronger Ukraine would become. Volodymyr Zelenskiy, in the TV show that made him famous in Ukraine and eventually catapulted him to the presidency, played a Russian-speaking high school history teacher who suddenly becomes president. In the brief scenes in which we see Zelenskiy's character actually teaching, he is quizzing his students about the great Ukrainian national historian and politician Mykhailo Hrushevsky.

### 3. For Russia, Nato is a four-letter word

It was violent Russian opposition to EU membership for Ukraine that in late 2013 precipitated the Maidan revolution, which in turn precipitated the Russian annexation of Crimea and incursion into eastern Ukraine. But after the end of the cold war, it was Nato expansion that had been the greatest irritant to the relationship between Russia and the west, a relationship that found Ukraine trapped in between.

Nato expansion proceeded very slowly, then seemingly all at once. In the immediate wake of the Soviet collapse, it was not a foregone conclusion that Nato would get bigger. In fact, most US policymakers, and the US military, opposed expanding the alliance. There was even talk, for a while, of disbanding Nato. It had served its purpose – to contain the Soviet Union – and now everyone could go their separate ways. This changed in the early years of the Clinton administration. The motor for the change came from two directions. One was a group of idealistic foreign policy hands inside the Clinton national security council, and the other was the eastern European states.

After 1991, the post-communist countries of eastern Europe, particularly Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, found themselves in an uncertain security environment. Nearby Yugoslavia was falling apart, and they had their own potential border disputes. Most of all, though, they had a vivid memory of Russian imperialism. They did not believe Russia would remain weak for ever, and they wanted to align with Nato while they still could. “If you don’t let us into Nato, we’re getting nuclear weapons,” Polish officials told a team of thinktank researchers in 1993. “We don’t trust the Russians.”

In presenting their case, it did not hurt that the leaders of the eastern European countries had a great deal of moral credibility. It was after a meeting with, among others, Václav Havel and Lech Wałęsa in Prague in January 1994 that Bill Clinton announced that “the question is no longer whether Nato will take on new members but when.” This formulation – not whether, but when – became official US policy. Five years later, the Czech Republic (having peacefully divorced Slovakia), Hungary and Poland were inducted into Nato. In the years to come, 11 more countries would join, bringing the total number of countries [in the alliance](#) to 30.

During the recent crisis, some American pundits and policymakers have claimed that Russia did not object to Nato until quite recently, when it was searching for a pretext to invade Ukraine. The claim is genuinely ludicrous. Russia has been protesting Nato expansion since the very beginning. The Russian deputy foreign minister told Clinton’s top Russia hand Strobe Talbott in 1993 that “Nato is a four-letter word”. At a joint press conference with Clinton in 1994, Boris Yeltsin, to whom Clinton had been such a loyal ally, reacted with fury when he realised that Nato was actually moving ahead with its plans to include the eastern European states. He predicted that a “cold peace” in Europe would be the result.

Russia was too weak, and still too dependent on western loans, to do anything except complain and watch warily as Nato increased in power. The alliance’s intervention in Kosovo in 1999 was particularly disturbing to the Russian leadership. It was, first of all, an intervention in a situation that Russia viewed as an internal conflict. Kosovo was, at the time, part of Serbia. After the Nato intervention, it was, in effect, no longer part of Serbia. Meanwhile the Russians had their own Kosovo-like situation in Chechnya, and it suddenly seemed to them that it was not impossible that Nato could intervene in that situation as well. As one American analyst who studied the Russian military told me: “They got scared because they *knew* what the state of Russian conventional forces was. They saw what the actual state of US conventional forces was. And they saw that while they had a lot of problems in Chechnya with their own Muslim minority, the United States just intervened to basically break Kosovo off of Serbia.”

The next year, Russia officially changed its military doctrine to say that it could, if threatened, [resort to the use](#) of tactical nuclear weapons. One of the authors of the doctrine told the Russian military paper Krasnaya Zvezda that Nato’s eastward expansion was a threat to Russia and that this was the reason for the lowered threshold for the use of nuclear weapons. That was 22 years ago.

The second post-Soviet round of Nato expansion was the largest. Agreed to in 2002 and made official in 2004, it brought Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia into the alliance. Almost all these states were part of the Soviet bloc, and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – the “Baltics” – were once part of the Soviet Union. Now they had joined the west.

As this was happening, a series of events shook up the Russian periphery. The “colour revolutions” – coming in quick succession in Georgia in 2003 (Rose), Ukraine in 2004 (Orange) and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (Tulip) – all used mass protests to eject corrupt pro-Russian incumbents. These events were greeted with great enthusiasm in the west as a reawakening of democracy, and with scepticism and trepidation in the Kremlin as an encroachment on Russian space. In the US, policymakers celebrated that freedom was on the march. In Moscow, there was a slightly paranoid concern that the colour revolutions were the work of the western secret services, and that Russia was next.

The Kremlin might not have been right about a long-range western plot, but they weren’t wrong to think that the west never saw it as an equal, as a peer. The fact is that at every turn, at every sticking point, in every situation, the west, and the US in particular, did what it wanted to do. It was, at times, exquisitely sensitive to Russian perceptions; at other times, cavalier. But in all cases the US just pressed ahead. Eventually this just became the way things were. Relations between the two sides soured, and positions hardened. In 2006, Dick Cheney gave an aggressive speech in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, in which he celebrated the achievements of the Baltic nations. “The system that has brought such great hope to the shores of the Baltic can bring the same hope to the far shores of the Black Sea, and beyond,” he said. “What is true in Vilnius is also true in Tbilisi and Kyiv, and true in Minsk, and true in Moscow.” As Samuel Charap and Timothy Colton note in their excellent short history of the 2014 Ukraine conflict, *Everyone Loses*, “One can only conjecture the reaction to such statements in the Kremlin.”

A year later, at the 2007 Munich Security Conference, in what is widely considered a key turning point in relations between Russia and the west, Putin delivered his response, assailing the US and its unipolar system for its arrogance, its flouting of international law, and its hypocrisy. “We are constantly being taught about democracy,” he said of Russia. “But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves.”

The warning was heard, but not heeded. In April 2008, in Bucharest, Nato countries met and delivered a promise that Georgia and Ukraine “will become members of Nato”. It was, as many have since noted, the worst of both worlds: a promise of membership without any of the actual benefits, in the form of security guarantees, that membership would bring. A few months later, in what, up to that point, was by far the most significant military action outside its borders, Russia defeated Georgia in a decisive five-day war.

In retrospect, one could argue that if Nato had moved faster and accepted Ukraine and Georgia much earlier, none of what followed would have happened. This argument has the virtue of examples to bolster it: the Baltics entered Nato, and despite being former Soviet republics, have experienced relatively little Russian harassment since. But one could also argue that, in the face of mounting Russian alarm and repeated warnings about “red lines” over Nato, the US States and its allies should have been extra careful. They should have taken into account the specificity of the places they were dealing with, in particular Ukraine. Ukraine was not Russia, in Leonid Kuchma’s famous phrase, but it was also not Poland. One of the problems with Ukraine’s Nato bid in 2008, for example, pushed forth by the western-friendly Yushchenko administration, was that it was unpopular inside Ukraine – in large part because Ukrainians knew how Russia felt about it, and were rightly worried.

But as Nato and the EU both expanded farther east, their representatives considered it a matter of principle not to make compromises with a regime they viewed as trying to bully them and Ukraine. Again, they may have been right in principle. In practice, Putin has been warning of this invasion, in one form or another, for 15 years. A great many voices are now saying that we should have been much tougher on Putin much earlier – that the sanctions we are now seeing should have been deployed after the war in Georgia in 2008, or after the polonium poisoning in London of [Alexander Litvinenko](#) in 2006. But there is also a case to be made that we should have thought more deeply about how to create a security arrangement, and an economic one, in which Ukraine would never have been faced with such a fateful choice.

#### 4. What Putin thinks

Still, at the centre of this tragedy lies one man: Vladimir Putin. He has embarked on a murderous and criminal war that also appears almost certain to be judged a colossal strategic blunder – uniting Europe, galvanising Nato, destroying his economy and isolating his country. What happened?

There have always been multiple competing views of Putin, falling along different axes as to his competence, his intelligence, his morality. That is, some people who thought he was evil also thought he was smart, and some people who thought he was merely defending Russian interests also thought he was incompetent.

Five years ago in this paper, during the boom in Putinology that followed Donald Trump's election, I [made the case](#) that Putin was basically a "normal" politician in the Russian context. That didn't mean he was in any way admirable – the way prosecuted the war in Chechnya, which launched his presidential candidacy, was evidence enough of his bad intentions. Nor did I think he should be hacking Hillary Clinton's emails. Nonetheless I thought that, given Russia's history, its traumatic experience of the post-Soviet transition, the internal dynamics of the Yeltsin regime, and the wider geopolitical context, the person who took over from Yeltsin was almost certain to have been a nationalist authoritarian, whether or not he was named Vladimir Putin. The question seemed to be: would this other nationalist authoritarian, not named Putin, have behaved very differently? Here there was some limited historical evidence, in the persons of Boris Yeltsin (author of the first war in Chechnya) and Dmitry Medvedev (author of the war in Georgia), that he would not.

The moment, at least in my mind, where Putin rendered these questions irrelevant, was the [attempted poisoning](#) with a nerve agent of the oppositionist Alexei Navalny, an attempted murder that would almost certainly have had to have Putin's approval. Other political murders in Russia had seemed to me less clearcut. There was good reason to believe that the journalist [Anna Politkovskaya](#) and the politician [Boris Nemtsov](#), for example, had been killed on the order of the Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov. And while Kadyrov was Putin's loyal ally, they were [not one and the same](#). Possibly this was a distinction without a difference, and yet it seemed that talk of a dictatorship in Russia obscured the fact that the country still had some room, albeit narrowing by the year, for political life and freedom of thought. We are now seeing what an actual Russian dictatorship looks like: all remnants of an opposition media shuttered, journalists threatened with 15 years of prison, unbridled and unanswerable police aggression. With the invasion of Ukraine, there is no one left who thinks Putin is merely acting like a standard post-Soviet Russian politician.

Is there any explaining Putin's thought process? Here, there were objective and subjective factors. Objectively, he was not wrong to think that Ukraine was integrating further and further into the west. The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement that he had so fiercely opposed in 2013 had been signed in 2014 and gone into effect in 2017. Nato, too, was on its way. There were now Nato weapons and Nato personnel in Ukraine. Putin's attempt to exert control over Ukrainian politics by creating the breakaway republics in Donetsk and Luhansk had failed. In fact, it had not only failed, it had backfired. Ukrainians who had been lukewarm toward Nato now supported joining and many who had entertained pro-Russian sentiments had seen what Russian puppets had done in the breakaway republics. Ukraine, an imperfect democracy, scored a 61 on the [Freedom House scale](#) in 2021; the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (competing under the umbrella term "Eastern Donbas") scored a 4. No one wanted that for themselves. Putin had won Crimea and some territory in the east, but he had lost Ukraine. In the wake of Joe Biden's election, which signalled a renewed American commitment to Europe and Nato and, inter alia, Ukraine, things were going less and less in Putin's favour.

But he was not entirely out of options. In 2015 he had extracted, through force of arms, the Minsk-2 agreement – an onerous peace deal, never actually implemented by either side, that had obliged Ukraine to reintegrate the Donetsk and Luhansk republics into a federated Ukraine, where they would essentially have veto power over the country's foreign policy; perhaps, in 2022, he could get Minsk-3 as well. And if he had previously left the implementation of the Minsk agreement to a democratically elected Ukrainian



government, he could decide not to make that mistake again. He could install a leader in Kyiv whom he could trust. A month before the invasion, the British government declared that it possessed intelligence indicating that Putin planned to do exactly that.

And yet here we get into the subjective factors: why, in retrospect, did Putin think he could pull this manoeuvre on a country the size of Ukraine? Partly, to be sure, he was buoyed up by his string of military victories – in Chechnya, in Georgia, in Crimea, in Syria. He had found great success, often at relatively little cost, by being a kind of international spoiler to the west's designs in various parts of the world. He must also have been emboldened by what had happened in Ukraine in 2014. Crimea had surrendered to Russia without a shot. A few weeks later, a small group of middle-aged mercenaries had been able to march 100 miles into Ukraine and capture a small city called Slovyansk, igniting the active phase of the war in eastern Ukraine. If a ragtag outfit could do something like that, imagine what an actual army could do.

There was also the important factor that Putin did not believe Ukraine was a real country. This was not specific to Putin – many Russians, unfortunately, don't see why Ukraine should be independent. But with Putin this has become a real obsession, impermeable to contradictory evidence. One type of leader would see that Ukraine refuses to submit to his will and conclude that it was an independent entity. But for Putin this could only mean that it was controlled by someone else. After all, this was already the case in the parts of Ukraine that Putin had conquered – he had installed puppets to run the self-proclaimed people's republics in eastern Ukraine. So perhaps it stood to reason that the west had also installed a puppet – Zelenskiy – who would run at the first sign of trouble.

## **5. Where does this end?**

Just about everyone has been surprised by the ferocity of the Ukrainian resistance: Putin, obviously, but also western military analysts who had accurately predicted the invasion but inaccurately thought the war would be over very quickly, and possibly even the Ukrainians themselves. Before the war, sociologists who studied Ukraine pointed to a fairly high willingness on the part of Ukrainians to fight for their country, but it was one thing to tell a sociologist, and it was another thing to go and fight. But, clearly, the Ukrainians have decided to fight.

Putin clearly did not expect Volodymyr Zelenskiy to turn into Winston Churchill. Zelenskiy had been elected as a peace candidate in 2019. A political novice from the country's industrial south-east, he won an impressive 73% of the vote in a runoff against Petro Poroshenko. The latter's campaign slogan had been "Army! Language! Faith!" Zelenskiy, by contrast, was elected as a breath of fresh air, someone who was going to do things differently, and also someone who indicated a willingness to try to negotiate with Putin to end the war. Poroshenko's campaign warned that Zelenskiy was a Kremlin stooge who would sell out the country. People voted for him anyway.

By the time war rolled around, Zelenskiy was no longer popular in Ukraine. His approval rating was in the 20s. He had failed to find a peaceful solution to the festering conflict in the Donbas region, and he had started persecuting his opponents. Viktor Medvedchuk, a close ally of Putin who was considered his point man in Ukraine, was placed under [house arrest](#), and Poroshenko, still Zelenskiy's main political rival, was [charged with treason](#) for some business dealings he had with Medvedchuk and the separatist regions in 2014. And then, when the clouds of war started gathering, Zelenskiy insisted the threat was not real. He criticised the Biden administration for its alarmist rhetoric. The night before the invasion, he told Ukrainians they could sleep soundly that night. But the first Russian missiles hit their targets before dawn.

The day before, in his anguished, last-minute appeal to the Russian people, Zelenskiy had made clear that he did not want war. But it was also the case that he did not have much room for compromise. The only clear path to peace – implementation of the Minsk accords – had become, with the passage of time, even more intolerable to Ukrainians than it had been at their signing. At the end of the day, people don't like to feel as if they have been bullied into compromise by their larger and angrier neighbour. And most observers noted that, as terrifying as a Russian invasion was, a compromise by Zelenskiy that ceded too much would probably lead to the overthrow of his government.

If the only way to avoid war was through a craven surrender, then it would have to be war. Ukraine would fight. And fight they have.

Now, as the Russian army regroups and starts bombing and shelling Ukrainian cities, Nato governments are faced with an excruciating choice: either they watch in horror as innocent Ukrainians are killed, or they get further involved and risk an even wider conflict. Where this stops it's impossible to say. As of this writing, with the Russian leadership continuing to put forth maximalist demands, a settlement looks far away. And whether, if the Russian demands moderate, Zelenskiy will be able to accept a Russian Crimea and eastern Ukraine after all the blood his people have spilled – and, indeed, whether the people will accept it – is an open question.

Someday, the war will end, and someday after that, though probably not as soon as one might hope, the regime in Russia will have to change. There will be another opportunity to welcome Russia again into the concert of nations. Our job then will be to do it differently than we did it this time, in the post-Soviet period. But that is work for the future. For now, in agony and sympathy, we watch and wait.

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HEADLINE	03/11 What is behind Russia's biological claims?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/russia-biological-weapon-claim-us-un-ukraine-bio-labs-explainer">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/russia-biological-weapon-claim-us-un-ukraine-bio-labs-explainer</a>
GIST	<p>The UN security council <a href="#">met</a> on Friday at Russia's request to discuss Moscow's claims that the US is funding "military biological activities" in Ukraine – in other words, secretly developing biological weapons in Ukrainian laboratories. The event saw some heated discussion. The Russian ambassador to the UN, Vasily Nebenzya, evoked the <a href="#">terrifying specter of an "uncontrolled spread of bio agents from Ukraine"</a> across Europe. His American counterpart, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, warned that Russia's claim could be a pretext for it launching its own biological weapons attack on Ukraine.</p> <p>So what is the dispute all about, and what is actually happening inside <a href="#">Ukraine</a>?</p> <p><b>How did "bio labs" become the latest front in the Ukraine information war?</b></p> <p>Last Sunday the Russian ministry of foreign affairs posted <a href="#">a tweet</a> accusing the US and Ukrainian governments of running a secret "military-biological programme" inside the stricken country. Moscow claimed that its invading forces had discovered evidence of an "emergency clean-up" to hide the programme.</p> <p>Moscow went on to claim that it had found documents related to the secret US operation in laboratories in the Ukrainian cities of Kharkiv and Poltava.</p> <p><a href="#">The allegations were quickly amplified by China</a>, which supported the claims during Friday's UN security council debate. The theory also took on a life of its own on social media under the hashtag #usbiolabs, and found a welcome home among <a href="#">rightwing outlets</a> in the US including the <a href="#">War Room podcast</a> of Donald Trump's former White House adviser Steve Bannon and the Fox News primetime show <a href="#">hosted by Tucker Carlson</a>.</p> <p><b>How have the US and Ukrainian governments responded?</b></p> <p>Both the US and Ukraine have categorically denied that they are developing any biological weapons inside the country. At Friday's meeting, the US ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, <a href="#">said</a>: "I will say this once: 'Ukraine does not have a biological weapons program.'" She went on to turn the accusation back on Moscow. "It is Russia that has long maintained a biological weapon program in violation of international law."</p> <p>Ukraine's ambassador to the world body, Sergiy Kyslytsya, used more colourful language. He called the idea being advanced by <a href="#">Russia</a> "a bunch of insane delirium".</p>



### **What are independent world bodies saying?**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has said it is unaware of activity by Ukraine violating any international treaty, including the ban on biological weapons.

The UN high commissioner for disarmament, Izumi Nakamitsu, confirmed that the UN was not aware of any biological weapons programmes in Ukraine. Nakamitsu pointed to the Biological Weapons Convention, which has prohibited the development and use of biological weapons since 1975. The convention was backed by then president Richard Nixon, who in 1969 also [put a stop](#) to the US developing its own offensive biological weapons.

### **So do bio labs exist inside Ukraine, and is the US supporting them?**

Yes, and yes. Ukraine does operate biological laboratories which receive US funding. The US undersecretary of state Victoria Nuland affirmed those facts in a Senate foreign relations committee hearing this week in which the Republican senator Marco Rubio asked her directly whether Ukraine had biological weapons.

Nuland did not answer the question head on. “Ukraine has biological research facilities,” she replied, adding that there was concern that Russian forces were trying to gain control of the labs. “We are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces.”

Nuland’s comments were seized upon by far-right commentators as further evidence of a secret US-Ukraine plot. In fact, US funding to the laboratories had its roots in the fall of the Soviet Union after which money was pumped into Ukraine and other former Soviet countries to help them transfer scientific skills away from weapons programmes towards public health initiatives.

The scheme was originally known as the Cooperative Threat Reduction ([CTR](#) [programme](#)), but is now more commonly referred to as the biological engagement programme. It has been successful in supporting former Soviet and other countries to fulfil public health obligations.

“This is one of the best things that we do,” Dr Gigi Gronvall, senior scholar at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, told the Guardian.

Most of the work of the Ukraine labs today, Gronvall said, involved surveillance of diseases in animals and people as an early-warning system for illnesses such as African swine fever, which is endemic in the region. “We know pathogens don’t respect borders, so helping to put out public health fires before they become too big is an advantage to all of us,” she said.

### **Do the Ukraine laboratories store dangerous biological agents?**

Yes, it appears so. As part of their work researching diseases the bio labs do seem to hold dangerous pathogens. We know that because WHO is urging Ukraine to destroy any highly dangerous agents in its laboratories to avoid the risk of a disastrous outbreak should one of the labs be hit under Russian attack.

“As part of this work, WHO has strongly recommended to the ministry of health in Ukraine and other responsible bodies to destroy high-threat pathogens to prevent any potential spills,” the UN health agency said.

The WHO has worked in Ukraine for several years helping the bio labs improve their safety and security, so it knows what it is talking about.

### **If Russian claims of a secret bioweapons programme are fake news, does that mean there is nothing to worry about?**

No. In addition to the threat of pathogens held in Ukrainian labs leaking out or falling into the hands of Russian forces, there is the threat of Russia potentially launching its own biological weapons attack. [The assessment](#) of the US state department is that Russia continues to maintain an offensive biological weapons programme in violation of the convention that it has signed.

Earlier this week, the White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, accused Russia under Vladimir Putin of having a “long and well-documented track record” of using chemical weapons, pointing to [the poisoning of the opposition leader Alexei Navalny](#) and Russia’s support of the Syrian regime while it deployed chemical weapons. She went on to warn that Moscow’s claim of a secret biological weapons programme in Ukraine could in fact be laying the foundations for a Russian chemical or biological weapons assault inside Ukraine.

That possibility leaves even seasoned experts rattled. “I hope that this is more of a disinformation talking point than an actual thing,” Gronvall said. “I guess we shall see.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 McDonald’s departure: more than burgers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/mcdonalds-russia-departure-more-than-burgers-west-putin">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/mcdonalds-russia-departure-more-than-burgers-west-putin</a>
GIST	<p>When the first McDonald’s in Moscow opened 32 years ago, the line of Russians waiting outside was hundreds of metres long, and there were long queues again this week for a last Happy Meal and a slice of history, as the fast-food giant <a href="#">closes its doors in Russia</a>.</p> <p>The shuttering of 850 McDonald’s franchises around the country is supposed to be temporary, but nothing about the war in Ukraine and the consequent exodus of western companies suggests the rift will be healed any time soon.</p> <p>McDonald’s’ departure, like its arrival, is about a lot more than burgers. The golden arches of history, that once seemed to be bounding forward, now appear to be turning full circle and threatening to take <a href="#">Russia</a> back in time.</p> <p>An urban consumer culture built around Visa and Mastercard, Ikea, Nike, Apple, Zara and Netflix has evaporated in a few days.</p> <p>“There’s just this sickening feeling that they’re going to go back, not to the 1990s, but to the 1970s when you didn’t have access to these things, and when you were living isolated from the rest of the world,” said Prof Angela Stent, a former national intelligence officer for Russia on the National Intelligence Council, now at Georgetown University.</p> <p>The looped trajectory of the past three decades has been driven by a lot of disparate forces, inside and outside Russia, economic and political, and ultimately very personal: the ambitions, fears and impulses of <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a>.</p> <p>When the first McDonald’s opened in Russia, the Soviet Union still existed. “We didn’t know what fast food was,” wrote Mitya Kushelevich, a photographer, in <a href="#">a recollection in the Guardian</a>. “We thought it probably tasted like freedom and we wanted to sample it.”</p> <p>To many people, it tasted like the end of the cold war, if not the end of history. But while Russians wanted to consume capitalism, they were careful from the start not to be consumed by it.</p> <p>“People misunderstood: Russians didn’t want to be Americans, and they didn’t want to be like America, but they wanted the same stuff: the jeans, the cigarettes, the chewing gum, the burgers,” said Fiona Hill, who was an exchange student in Russia in the late 1980s and went on to become an intelligence analyst on Russia and then senior director for <a href="#">Europe</a> and Russia in the White House.</p> <p>Nautilus Pompilius, a Russian rock group, had a hit song at the time called Goodbye America, with lyrics that reflected that scepticism, about being “taught for so long to love your forbidden fruits” but finding that “your ripped jeans have become too small for me”.</p>

The honeymoon with westernisation was short-lived. The shock transition from communism to a market economy, shepherded by a liberal government with western consultants, was a disaster, producing oligarchs, lawlessness and poverty.

When Putin was first elected president in 2000, Russians looked to him to restore order. But even then, the former KGB officer still had aspirations of turning Russia into a strong market economy, albeit with authoritarian governance.

“Putin was saying: ‘I’ll bring you bread and circuses, I’ll bring you Big Macs, Ikea, reality TV like everybody else has, and you leave the politics and the national security to me and everything will be great,’” said Hill, who has co-authored a biography of the Russian president.

In a 2001 speech to the German Bundestag, Putin talked about the two nations “building a common European home”. “As for European integration,” he said, “we not just support these processes, but we are looking to them with hope.”

At the St Petersburg International Economic Forum, Russia vied to be one of the world’s industrial powers. At the same time, Putin’s government provided the US with logistical help in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks.

The disillusion that set in over the ensuing years came from several different directions at once. Putin’s attempt to order a modern economy into being one less reliant on oil and gas faltered in large part because he was not prepared to give up tight central control. Small businesses were given no protection against the oligarchs. And the global financial crash of 2007-08 raised questions over whether the west had a model worth following at all.

“When the financial crisis hits, the Russians are thinking: these guys aren’t that smart,” Hill said. “They’ve just completely and utterly upended not just their own economy, but the global economy.”

At the same time, Putin and his circle had come to see Nato as an offensive alliance and a threat. When its planes bombed Russia’s ally Yugoslavia in 1999, it was not a defensive act, in Moscow’s eyes, as no Nato member had been attacked.

In 2002, George W Bush withdrew the US from the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty with Russia, deepening suspicions about US motives. And the Kremlin was convinced western hands orchestrated the Rose revolution in Georgia in 2003 and the Orange revolution in Ukraine the following year, further undermining Moscow’s sway in what was once the Soviet Union.

The belief that those uprisings were western plots was reinforced by the Nato decision during the alliance’s 2008 summit in Bucharest to open the door to membership to both Ukraine and Georgia.

“Putin thought that in return for cooperating with the US in Afghanistan, the US would recognise that Russia was a great power with a right to a sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space. Instead he got withdrawal from the ABM treaty, he got the colour revolutions and the Iraq war,” Stent said. “I think by 2007, he was thoroughly soured by his experiences with the west, and that’s also when he started harbouring these territorial designs.”

The Nato-led intervention in Libya in 2011 led to another sharp downward turn in Russia’s descent towards isolation. Moscow felt tricked into voting for a UN resolution that approved “all necessary measures” to protect Libyan civilians, a move broadly interpreted by the US and its European allies as a mandate for regime change. Putin is said to have repeatedly watched video footage of the murder of Muammar Gaddafi by a vengeful mob.

Putin’s way of clawing back Russian relevance from a position of weakness has been to tear up global norms, killing defectors in Britain with radioactive substances and nerve agents, and in 2014, swiftly annexing Crimea. The ensuing sanctions served to turn Putin’s Russia even further inward.

“According to people with knowledge of Mr Putin’s conversations with his aides over the past two years, the president has completely lost interest in the present,” Mikhail Zygar, a Russian journalist and author of All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin, wrote in the New York Times. “The economy, social issues, the coronavirus pandemic, these all annoy him ... In his mind, Mr Putin finds himself in a unique historical situation in which he can finally recover from the previous years of humiliation.”

The failure to conquer Ukraine with the ease he had expected has added yet more humiliation, to which Putin shows every sign of responding with greater violence, with no end to the murderous cycle in sight. The departure of McDonald’s and all that represents looks destined to be just a speck in the avalanche brought on by Russia’s fall.

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HEADLINE	03/12 Covid cloud lifting, legacy of grief lingers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/12/covid-pandemic-two-years-later">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/12/covid-pandemic-two-years-later</a>
GIST	<p>Pamela Swan Addison keeps hearing the same phrases over and over. People are tired. They are tired of wearing masks, tired of getting vaccinations, tired of their lives being disrupted. Addison is tired too. But she’s tired of different things. She’s tired of listening to people complain about masks and vaccinations and disrupted lives when she knows her life will never be the same again.</p> <p>She’s tired of the inevitable question people ask her whenever they discover her husband Martin died of Covid early in the pandemic aged 44: did he have an underlying health condition? He didn’t, as it happens, but why do they have to be so insensitive?</p> <p>She’s tired of the conspiracy theories and fabrications. “One person commented my husband didn’t die of Covid, the hospital was paid to lie to me to inflate the numbers. How could someone say that to a widow who was grieving?”</p> <p>She’s tired of the thought that her husband, a frontline health worker who died in April 2020, has been all but forgotten. He gave his life serving his patients in a New Jersey hospital like a soldier who falls in battle, leaving her to care alone for their two-year-old son Graeme and three-year-old daughter Elsie, but where is the recognition?</p> <p>All of this negativity frustrates and saddens her. She set up <a href="#">a group</a> for young widows and widowers of Covid-19 so that others could share their experiences, and they all say the same things.</p> <p>“We talk about how ignored we feel, how our kids are the forgotten grievers. People keep saying this disease is not so serious. But it is. It has killed almost a million people.”</p> <p>Two years ago Sars-Cov-2 penetrated the United States, <a href="#">tentatively at first</a> and then with a terrifying roar. On 11 March 2020 the World Health Organization <a href="#">declared</a> Covid a pandemic, and two days later Donald Trump <a href="#">announced</a> a national emergency, adding the memorable disclaimer: “I don’t take responsibility at all.”</p> <p>Now two years into the global pandemic, hope is in the air that the US might finally be turning the corner. The Omicron surge is <a href="#">abating</a>, mask mandates are being <a href="#">scrapped</a> and vaccination requirements <a href="#">lifted</a> even in Democratic states where public safety stances have been most stringent. Music festivals are being <a href="#">planned</a> this summer with no Covid restrictions.</p> <p>But the more the Covid cloud appears to be clearing, the more it becomes apparent that the consequences of the virus are likely to stick around. As Addison said, it’s hard to put behind you a disease that has killed almost 1 million people in America alone.</p> <p>Ashton Verdery, a sociologist at Pennsylvania state university, created with colleagues a bereavement multiplier that estimates how many people in the US have lost a close relative to Covid. Given the paucity</p>

of historical demographic data for Hispanic and Asian Americans, they based their calculations on population statistics for white and Black Americans though they are confident their conclusions apply broadly to all US residents.

Verdery was taken aback by [the findings](#). The number affected by Covid bereavement was much larger than he had expected.

Verdery and the team concluded that for every person who dies of Covid in the US there are almost nine people in their immediate kinship group left bereaved. For every grandparent who dies there are on average four grandchildren mourning them, every parent two children, every sibling two brothers or sisters left behind.

That amounts to a total pool of Covid bereaved people in the US of about 8.5 million, including almost 4 million Americans who have lost a grandparent and more than 2 million who are grieving the loss of a parent.

Verdery told the Guardian that he had been particularly struck by the large numbers of people who lost a grandparent. “Many children will remember for the rest of their lives that they lost a grandparent in the pandemic.”

The implications are especially acute when children lose a parent – a position that now applies to [more than 200,000](#) under-18s.

“That’s going to have big consequences,” Verdery said. “Children who lose a parent have a greater likelihood of dropping out of school, not attending college, criminal justice involvement, lower earnings and higher mortality in later life.”

The US could conceivably be turning the corner on the pandemic, but not if you are one of the many people suffering post-coronavirus symptoms known as long Covid.

There is so much we don’t know about long Covid, not least how many of the almost [80 million people](#) in the US who have been infected with the virus are suffering the most common symptoms of prolonged disease – tiredness, breathing problems, joint or muscle pain, and difficulties with concentrating.

Eric Topol, professor of molecular medicine at Scripps Research in San Diego, said that the number of US residents suffering enduring problems is likely to be more than 10 million. Some of his medical colleagues who contracted the virus in the early days of the pandemic are still very debilitated, he said.

“This is going to be one of the lingering profound results. We are in the dark, we have no idea where this will end. We have no treatment that is effective, and there’s been not nearly enough given the millions of people adversely affected.”

For Topol, the story of the past two years has been that of the extremes of American capability. On the one hand, there is the story of the lightning-fast development of vaccines, which he calls “historic, momentous, the greatest biomedical triumph yet”.

A [timeline](#) he put together on his Twitter feed makes the point. The Sars-Cov-2 virus was genetically sequenced on 10 January 2020 – two months before Trump announced his “no-responsibility” national emergency.

Five days later the first mRNA vaccine was designed by the US National Institutes of Health in partnership with Moderna. Two months after that a trial began of a vaccine that has proven to be remarkably resilient at withstanding the mutational dexterity of this virulent disease.

Compared with this unparalleled example of scientific speed and ingenuity, Topol despairs at how the vaccines and boosters have been put to use. Or not put to use. “We botched the whole booster program in the US,” he said.

Americans have taken up booster shots at a dramatically lower level than other wealthier countries despite the relative ease with which they can be obtained. The [latest estimate](#) from the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) is that booster coverage is as low as 42%.

Expressed as [a league table of countries](#), the US now ranks 67th for the proportion of its population that is fully vaccinated and 54th for boosters. “We should see those rankings and have a sense of blatant failure,” Topol said. “We had reasons to be the leader in vaccine use and yet we slumped into being a world laggard.”

The consequences of that failure continue to be felt in the US despite the leavening mood. Thousands of Americans are still dying each week, deaths which Topol believes are almost entirely preventable given the efficacy of boosters at mitigating the deadliness of the virus.

He sees the continuing costs of failure too in the [burnout](#) within his profession. “Colleagues are going for early retirement because they can’t take it any more, people are changing careers, we’re losing nurses. It’s palpable, the disenchantment. It’s not just burnout – it’s burnout squared.”

As Topol suggested, the problem is especially acute among nurses. The American Nurses Association [has said it expects](#) more than half a million experienced registered nurses to retire this year, adding to a shortage projected to exceed 1 million.

That leaves a healthcare system whose flaws have been [amply displayed](#) during the pandemic even more vulnerable should the virus mutate again into a new aggressive variant.

Danielle Allen, a Harvard professor and national policy leader on the Covid response, told the Guardian that the pandemic has exposed other fundamental fault-lines that have been festering in American society for the past 50 years. In her new book, [Democracy in the Time of Coronavirus](#), she explores how the country’s flailing approach was in significant part rooted in its gaping wealth inequality.

She notes how at the start of the pandemic affluent Americans retreated to their vacation homes and Zoom bubbles, “much as ancient Romans and early modern British aristocrats used to retreat to villas and country estates in the face of plague”. Meanwhile, low-income workers in essential frontline jobs – large proportions of whom were African American and Hispanic – were forced to turn up for work in person, prompting Covid case and death rates to match.

That core disparity is reflected in the latest statistics. [KFF reports](#) that two years on the racial gulf in Covid experiences remains huge: when data is age-adjusted it shows that Hispanic, Black, and Native American and Alaska Native people are twice as likely to die from Covid as their white counterparts.

“The pandemic has been an X-ray on who holds power and the vast separation between those elites and everybody else,” Allen said.

Allen recalls vividly the initial shock of the pandemic as it swooped down on her community. “It felt like falling off a cliff with no bungee cord. There was a plunge into hunger, and we had one of the highest mortality rates in the country among older people even though we have one of the crown jewels of biotech right here in Massachusetts.”

That dichotomy spoke volumes to her. “We were one of the richest states in the richest country in the world – and people felt abandoned.”

Abandoned. That’s the word that Allen kept hearing from people describing their plight.



It leads her to draw a highly sobering conclusion in her book, that Covid taught the US a very dark truth about itself: “We don’t know, in conditions of emergency, that we will be OK together.”

Too many people, she argues, “were willing to abandon our elders” to the virus. Too many people were willing to abandon essential workers, young people, people of colour, rural Americans.

For Allen, hard questions hang in the air even as the pall of the pandemic dissipates. The hardest question of all is stated bluntly in her book.

“If, in conditions of emergency, we cannot count on support from one another, then how do the institutions we share together have any legitimacy?”

That’s another potential long-term legacy of the virus in the US – its impact on democratic institutions. Around the first anniversary of the pandemic Ashley Quarcoo, a non-resident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment, assessed the situation and came up with some reasons to be cheerful.

In an article for the Council on Foreign Relations she pointed to new methods of voting, particularly voting by mail, that contributed to a historic turnout in the 2020 presidential election. She also highlighted the eruption of new forms of civic activism that reached a peak in the summer of protests following the police murder of George Floyd.

“There may be a silver lining that could strengthen US democracy in the longer-term,” she wrote then.

What a difference a year can make. The Guardian went to Quarcoo and asked her whether, on the second anniversary of the pandemic, she was still optimistic.

“There’s been a backlash to the huge election turnout in 2020, with many states passing laws to restrict voting by mail,” she said. “There’s also been a decline in confidence about our election integrity provoked by Donald Trump’s claims of election fraud.”

She still sees residues of the collective activism that the pandemic helped unleash, but there’s less consensus around the search for solutions. “That sense of social solidarity and coming together in the summer of 2020 has given way to mistrust, both about how things work and between citizen and citizen.”

As America scrambles to get back to a “normal” that perhaps never existed, Quarcoo warns that the wounds of these brutal two years run deep. “The social fabric of the US is more brittle, fissures are more deeply exposed and starkly clarified.”

That poses a challenge, she said. She gave it a name: the long Covid of our democracy.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 No pasarán: anti-fascist slogan significance</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/no-pasaran-anti-fascist-ukraine-spanish-civil-war">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/no-pasaran-anti-fascist-ukraine-spanish-civil-war</a>
GIST	<p>When the anti-Putin activist Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, a member of the Pussy Riot punk group, was tried for blasphemy in Moscow in 2012, she wore a T-shirt emblazoned with a defiant raised fist and the Spanish slogan “<i>no pasarán</i>”: they shall not pass.</p> <p>The phrase is associated with the Spanish civil war, which Vladimir Putin’s invasion of <a href="#">Ukraine</a> has made terrifyingly relevant – especially as volunteer fighters from across the world gather to defend the country from his attack.</p> <p><a href="#">No pasarán</a> became a slogan for the 35,000 volunteers of the International Brigades who travelled to Spain from more than 80 countries to defend its legal government from fascist-backed aggression. About 2,300 or more set out from Britain and Ireland. Another 2,800 left the US, forming the Abraham Lincoln Battalion – the first racially mixed US military unit led by a Black officer, Oliver Law.</p>

The brigadiers chose the right side of history. Both Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini sent troops to fight alongside the violent rightwing reactionaries led by Spain's future dictator, General Francisco Franco. Like Putin, they wanted to demolish democracy across [Europe](#).

In Ukraine, the president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, also wants a [volunteer "foreign legion"](#) to join the war. "This is the beginning of a war against Europe, against European structures, against democracy, against basic human rights, against a global order of law, rules and peaceful coexistence," he [said](#). "Anyone who wants to join the defence of Ukraine, Europe and the world can come."

The bad news for Putin is that some are already on their way, abandoning cozy homes and loving families in North and South America, Europe and Asia to fight in a foreign field. Over the past few days, I have been talking to the Canadian paramedic Anthony Walker as he travels through Poland towards Ukraine. The 29-year-old from Toronto is in contact with dozens more people who are also travelling, including military veterans from Canada, the UK and the US.

He has left a "distraught" wife and three children behind and hopes to become an army paramedic. "I guess I'll spend half my time healing people, and the other half shooting at people," he told me as he stocked up on supplies at a Polish medical store.

Like many International Brigadiers, Walker believes he will be protecting his own family back home from the global spread of Putin's fascist-style violence if he is not stopped now.

But [Spain](#) holds lessons that volunteers should heed. The first, obviously, is that war is deadly. One in five International Brigadiers died, and a similar number were seriously wounded. They also killed a lot of people, many of them conscripts. Another lesson is that, while you can volunteer to join an army, you cannot always freely leave one. Armies decide for themselves if, or how, that happens. Deserters are punished.

It is dangerous to fall prisoner. International Brigadiers were routinely shot, while those caught in Ukraine today also risk being exhibited as supposed proof that the "wicked west" wants to kill Russians. The Putin regime already claims they are mercenaries who are not covered by the Geneva convention.

Finally, their own countries may not let them fight. When the UK foreign secretary, [Liz Truss, encouraged people to volunteer](#), the prime minister's office suggested it may be illegal.

International Brigadiers found themselves spied on by intelligence services such as the FBI or MI5, in part because they were not all diehard democrats. A significant number were Stalinist communists. The Stasi, East Germany's secret police, would be founded and run by brigade veterans.

Looking at the first pictures of volunteers in the Ukraine, whether doing TikTok dances from the Indian subcontinent or daubing themselves with war paint, it seems obvious the legion will attract all types. Ukraine's military must assert its control.

The moral dilemma provoked by war was best put by the French philosopher Simone Weil, when she signed up for Spain aged 27 and shed pacifism. "When I realised that, despite all my efforts, I could not avoid taking part morally in this war, by which I mean that every day, at all hours, desiring the victory of one side over the other, I told myself that Paris was like being in the rearguard and took a train to Barcelona," she wrote.

Those who are injured, mortally or not, may well have last-minute regrets. George Orwell felt "violent resentment at having to leave this world which, when all is said and done, suits me so well" after being shot through the neck in Spain. He survived, and while he hated the thought of dying, he never regretted fighting there.

<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>The International Brigadiers were hailed as heroes in Madrid after helping stop Franco's advance on the city in 1936, ensuring that his hoped-for quick war lasted until 1939. It was in Madrid where the phrase <i>no pasarán</i> was coined – a cry now tragically suitable for Kyiv or Odesa.</p> <p>Another lesson from Spain is that being right does not ensure victory. <a href="#">Franco won the war</a>, ruling as dictator until 1975.</p> <p>Brigadiers, however, were fighting another war – about moral truth – that they did eventually win. While politicians in western democracies were too terrified of Hitler to send troops or weapons, the brigadiers argued that fascism must eventually be stopped with arms.</p> <p>When Hitler started the second world war five months after the Spanish war ended, they were proven right. The allies' final victory meant that the wider aim of stopping fascism was also achieved.</p> <p>There are, of course, many other <a href="#">ways to help Ukraine</a> that do not involve fighting. For those who go, however, the words of the firebrand Spanish communist Dolores Ibárruri, known as la Pasionaria, may one day be repeated by Ukrainians. "You are history. You are legend!" she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Aid groups in Ukraine struggle</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/12/we-need-safe-access-aid-groups-in-ukraine-struggle-amid-warning-7m-could-be-displaced">https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/12/we-need-safe-access-aid-groups-in-ukraine-struggle-amid-warning-7m-could-be-displaced</a>
GIST	<p>Aid workers are demanding "safe, unimpeded" access to hundreds of thousands of people forced to leave their homes in Ukraine, amid warnings that the number of people displaced within the country by the Russian invasion could reach <a href="#">nearly 7 million</a>.</p> <p>On Friday, the UN said <a href="#">1.85 million people</a> had been displaced internally by the conflict, a figure widely believed to be an underestimate in a highly volatile and rapidly changing security situation.</p> <p>With the flow of people fleeing westwards likely to intensify in coming days, humanitarian workers said in many cases they had been unable to get aid to the most vulnerable within <a href="#">Ukraine</a>.</p> <p>Sam Smith, spokesperson for the <a href="#">International Committee of the Red Cross</a>, said with Ukrainian Red Cross colleagues, they had delivered supplies to some locations. "But this is just a drop in the ocean when we are faced with skyrocketing levels of need," he said.</p> <p>"We want to do more, but security is making operations incredibly challenging," he added. "We face great difficulties in being able to move the needed supplies. This is an extremely dangerous time for families caught in the fighting and an extremely dangerous time for aid organisations, too."</p> <p>Joe Lowry, spokesperson for the <a href="#">International Organization for Migration</a>, said UN colleagues and partners were trying to deliver aid "whenever and wherever possible".</p> <p>But he added: "We need safe, unimpeded access to all areas affected by Russia's military offensive. It's essential to establish a pause in the fighting to allow for the safe passage of civilians caught in conflict to leave on a voluntary basis in the direction they choose and to ensure lifesaving humanitarian supplies can move in for those who remain."</p> <p>Even before the invasion, there were an estimated <a href="#">1.46 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Ukraine</a>, of whom 854,000 were in government-controlled areas in the east of the country.</p> <p>Since 24 February, hundreds of thousands of people have been on the move, mainly from the east, north and south of the country to the relatively calm west.</p>

At the same time, [more than 2.5 million people](#) have left the country. But, while they have been met with an extensive refugee relief effort, those inside the country have been facing increasingly dire conditions and patchy humanitarian support as relief efforts have been stymied by the violence.

Except for [an evacuation](#) of people from the eastern city of Sumy, attempts to arrange humanitarian corridors for civilians and the passage of aid have largely failed. “Targeted attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure and lack of safe passages are ... posing serious threats to the lives of thousands of civilians attempting to flee the hostilities,” the UN warned.

Russia has denied targeting civilians in what it calls its “special military operation”.

According to the UN, the war could displace [up to 6.7 million people](#) within Ukraine, 4.3 million of whom will need life-saving humanitarian assistance.

For the moment, western oblasts such as Zakarpatska, Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk have been hosting the greatest numbers of IDPs, with the city of Lviv – believed to have taken in about 200,000 people – approaching “breaking point”, the UN says.

Many people have been sheltering in cramped and overcrowded centres where access to electricity and water is limited. The World Health Organization [has warned](#) that infectious diseases such as Covid-19, measles or cholera could flourish in such conditions.

But, according to the UN, even this inadequate shelter could soon become unavailable to many. “Given the continuous growth of the displaced population, [it is expected that] local authorities will face the lack of premises to host new arrivals shortly,” it warned.

Adib Fletcher, director of humanitarian response at [Project Hope](#), a global health and relief organisation, said in comparison with the refugee crisis unfolding beyond Ukraine’s borders the situation for IDPs was “a more difficult context ... [with] a lot of different moving parts”.

“I think that the sky’s the limit in terms of the actual healthcare needs at this stage within Ukraine,” he added.

Data collected by UN partners found that women and children, people living with disabilities, older people and minority groups make up the majority of those displaced. Most IDPs came from the regions around the two biggest cities, Kyiv and Kharkiv. On Thursday, the mayor of Kyiv said about [half the capital’s population](#) had left, while most of Kharkiv’s 1.5 million inhabitants are thought to have fled the relentless Russian shelling.

Alexandra Bilak, director of the [internal displacement monitoring centre](#) at the Norwegian Refugee Council, said it had been “virtually impossible” to quantify the scale of the IDP crisis, “mostly due to the fact that the situation changes from day to day and from hour to hour, [and] there are very few people who have the capacity or even the mental space to keep track.”

Given the huge numbers involved, she added, there were serious questions over the ability of other towns and cities to manage new arrivals. The potential for sustainable solutions to the crisis was “like a dot on the horizon”, she said.

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HEADLINE	03/11 Russia claims US-backed bio-weapons plot
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/russia-un-claims-us-backed-biological-weapon-plot-kremlin-foreign-fighters-ukraine">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/russia-un-claims-us-backed-biological-weapon-plot-kremlin-foreign-fighters-ukraine</a>
GIST	Russia has accused Ukraine and the US at the UN security council of a plot to use migratory birds and bats to spread pathogens, raising alarm among other council members that the accusations could be intended to provide cover for future Russian <a href="#">use of biological weapons</a> .

The Russian permanent representative to the UN, Vasily Nebenzya, delivered a lengthy account of the alleged biological weapons plot, and said the birds, bats and insects supposedly intended to spread disease would cross Ukraine's western border.

"We call upon you to think about a very real biological danger to the people in European countries, which can result from an uncontrolled spread of bio agents from Ukraine," Nebenzya said. "And if there is a such a scenario then all [Europe](#) will be covered.

"The risk of this is very real given the interests of the radical nationalist groups in Ukraine are showing towards the work with dangerous pathogens conducted together with the ministry of defence of the United States."

The United Nations high representative for disarmament, Izumi Nakamitsu, said the UN was "not aware of any biological weapons programmes" in Ukraine, and pointed out there was an official channel for governments to raise any concerns about violations of the biological and toxin weapons convention banning their use.

In response to Nebenzya's claims, several member states on the security council warned that it could be a disinformation campaign ahead of a planned Russian attack inside Ukraine.

"The intent behind these lies seems clear and it is deeply troubling," said Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US ambassador to the UN. "We believe Russia could use chemical or biological agents for assassinations as part of a false flag incident or to support tactical military operations."

Before the UN session, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, expressed similar concerns.

"Allegedly, we are preparing a chemical attack," Zelenskiy said in a video address on Thursday. "This makes me really worried, because we've been repeatedly convinced: if you want to know Russia's plans, look at what Russia accuses others of."

Russian forces have continued their advance into Ukraine, bombing cities in the west of the country, including Lviv, Lutsk and Ivano-Frankivsk.

Elsewhere, satellite photos appeared to show a massive convoy outside Kyiv had largely dispersed and redeployed. The US space technology company Maxar said its pictures showed armoured units had fanned out through towns and forests in the area, with artillery moved into potential firing positions.

In Moscow, Vladimir Putin announced 16,000 foreign "volunteers" from the Middle East were ready to fight with Russian-backed forces in eastern Ukraine to "help" the people living in the Donbas region. In a meeting with Russia's defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, Putin also said western-made weapons including Javelin and Stinger missiles that were captured by the Russian army would be handed to Donbas forces.

As heavy shelling continued across eastern Ukraine's towns and cities, Ukrainian authorities reported Russia had killed more civilians than soldiers. Russian forces were also reported to have hit a psychiatric hospital near Izyum, a town in the Kharkiv region. The regional governor, Oleh Synegubov, called it a "war crime against civilians [and] genocide against the Ukrainian nation". He said 330 people had been in the hospital at the time, including wheelchair users and people unable to move. The exact number of casualties is still to be established.

In the besieged port city of Mariupol conditions remain desperate, with people trapped inside indoor shelters with no heat, electricity and little or no food. More than 1,300 people had died in the 10-day siege, said Ukraine's deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk. "They [Russia] want to destroy the people of Mariupol. They want to make them starve. It's a war crime," she said.

The Associated Press spoke to an exhausted-looking resident as he pulled a cart loaded with bags down an empty street flanked by damaged buildings in the port city. “I don’t have a home any more. That’s why I’m moving,” Aleksander Ivanov said. “It doesn’t exist any more. It was hit, by a mortar.”

More than 400,000 people remain trapped in Mariupol, which is surrounded by Russian forces, and basic supplies are running out. About 200,000 are believed to want to leave amid continuous Russian bombardment but have not been able to do so despite the daily declaration of humanitarian corridors.

A UN spokesperson said there were credible reports of Russians using cluster munitions in populated areas. Cluster munitions, which scatter small bombs over a large area, are banned by more than 100 countries, including the UK, but not Russia, Ukraine or the US.

More than 2.5 million people have fled Ukraine and a further 2 million are internally displaced, UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, said on Friday. The grim toll for Ukrainian civilians comes amid growing fears that Russia could stage a chemical attack, as senior Russian officials recycled old conspiracy theories about alleged western-made biological weapons.

The head of the Russian military’s radiation, chemical and biological protection troops, Igor Kirillov, said on Thursday that US-backed labs in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odesa were working on pathogens custom-designed to target Russians and other Slavs. According to Russian-state media, Kirillov alleged the US planned to exploit Ukraine’s “unique geographical position” by sending migratory birds carrying deadly diseases into Russia.

The Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, made a similar claim on Thursday, alleging that US-backed labs in Ukraine were working to “develop ethnically targeted biological weapons”. The director of the CIA, William Burns, told the US Senate intelligence committee that Russia could be laying the groundwork for a chemical or biological attack, which it would then blame on the US or Ukraine in a “false flag operation”.

“This is something, as all of you know very well, [that] is very much a part of Russia’s playbook,” he said. “They’ve used these weapons against their own citizens, they’ve at least encouraged the use in Syria and elsewhere, so it’s something we take very seriously.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Kyiv ‘ready to fight’; Russia force nears</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/kyiv-ready-to-fight-as-russian-forces-close-in-ukraine-capital">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/kyiv-ready-to-fight-as-russian-forces-close-in-ukraine-capital</a>
GIST	<p>Ukrainian officials have said Kyiv is “ready to fight” as Russian forces renewed their bombardment on the capital and observers warned of “an unimaginable tragedy” unfolding after more than two weeks of war.</p> <p>Air raid sirens and shelling rang out over Kyiv and other major Ukrainian cities on Saturday morning amid warnings from western defence officials that the Russians were beginning to gain ground around the capital.</p> <p>There were reports of loud explosions in Dnipro in the country’s east on Saturday, as well as Mykolaiv, Nikolaev and Kropyvnytskyi.</p> <p>But Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said the capital was “ready to fight”. He called it a “city under siege”, with checkpoints prepared and supply lines in place. “Kyiv will stand until the end.”</p> <p>Satellite imagery from Maxar Technologies on Saturday has shown homes and buildings on fire and Russian artillery battalions appearing to fire on towns surrounding to the north-west of the Ukrainian capital as forces advance. The Guardian has not independently verified the images.</p> <p>A senior US defence official <a href="#">said at a Pentagon briefing</a> on Friday: “We do assess that the Russians are beginning to make more momentum on the ground towards Kyiv, particularly from the east.”</p>



The UK Ministry of Defence [said on Saturday morning](#) that “the bulk of Russian ground forces” were around 25km from the centre of Kyiv, while the cities of Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy and Mariupol remain encircled and continued to suffer heavy Russian shelling.

However, the Institute for the Study of War, a US thinktank, said that Russian operations around Kyiv “remained largely stalled over the past 24 hours” to “resupply and refit frontline units” – an assessment shared by Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych, who said on Friday that the Russian advance had been halted over the past day.

Volodymyr Zelenskiy has called on Ukrainians to continue fighting, but said living conditions in the Kyiv region had deteriorated into a “humanitarian catastrophe” with disrupted gas, heating and water. The Ukrainian president said his country had reached a “strategic turning point” in the conflict. “It is impossible to say how many days we still have [ahead of us] to free Ukrainian land. But we can say we will do it,” he said. “We are already moving towards our goal, our victory.”

About 2 million people – half the population of the metropolitan area – had left the capital, the Kyiv mayor, Vitali Klitschko, said on Friday, and those who remained continued to prepare for its defence.

“Every street, every house is being fortified,” he said. “Even people who in their lives never intended to change their clothes, now they are in uniform with machine guns in their hands.”

Ukrainian soldiers described fierce fighting for control of the main highway leading into the capital, while missile strikes were reported hitting just outside Kyiv’s city limits on Friday.

“It’s frightening, but what can you do?” said Vasil Popov, a 38-year-old who works in advertising sales. “There is nowhere to really run or hide. We live here.”

Continuing Russian bombardments and attacks on civilians in cities across Ukraine have prompted warnings of “an unimaginable tragedy” and a new flurry of alarm from the UN that Russia is committing war crimes.

“We are really heading towards an unimaginable tragedy,” Stephen Cornish of Doctors Without Borders told Agence France-Presse, insisting “there is still time to avoid it, and we must see it avoided”.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians remain trapped and under fire in Ukrainian cities, but the situation in Mariupol is especially dire. Ten days into Russia’s siege, its population [has no access to electricity or mobile phone networks](#), and water and food are running out. On Friday 7,144 people were evacuated from four Ukrainian cities, Zelenskiy said in a televised address – a much lower number than managed to leave in each of the two previous days.

Zelenskiy accused Russia of refusing to allow people out of Mariupol and said Ukraine would try again to deliver food and medicines there on Saturday.

Ukraine has repeatedly raised concerns that Moscow’s ally Belarus, which has served as a staging point for Russian forces, will soon have its troops drawn into the invasion. Ukraine’s state centre for strategic communications said Belarus might launch an invasion of Ukraine today, after a meeting in Moscow between the Russian president, [Vladimir Putin](#), and the Belarusian leader, Alexander Lukashenko. Ukraine accused Russia of staging “false flag” air attacks on Belarus from Ukraine to provide an excuse for an offensive.

Putin and Lukashenko agreed on Friday that Moscow would supply its smaller neighbour with military equipment and mutual support against western sanctions, including on energy prices, the official Belarus state news agency BelTA said.

[Foreign combatants have already entered the Ukrainian conflict](#) on both sides, but the Kremlin has ramped up efforts to bring in reinforcements from Syria. [Syria's military has begun recruiting troops from its own ranks](#) to fight alongside Russian forces in Ukraine, promising payments of \$3,000 a month – a sum of up to 50 times more than a Syrian soldier's monthly salary. A furious Zelenskiy accused Russia of hiring “murderers from Syria, a country where everything has been destroyed ... like they are doing here to us”.

As the war continues, Russia faces an expanding net of sanctions. Western governments have announced plans to impose punitive tariffs on Russian trade to further isolate Moscow from the global economy. The G7 group of wealthy nations said it would [strip Russia of “most favoured nation”](#) status under World Trade Organization rules. The US president, Joe Biden, announced plans to ban the import of seafood, vodka and diamonds from Russia, and the UK government says it is planning to ban exports of luxury goods to Russia.

Deutsche Bank and Sony Pictures have joined the exodus of western businesses from Russia. In a [statement posted on its website](#), Deutsche Bank said it was “in the process of winding down our remaining business in Russia” and that there “won't be any new business in Russia”. Russia has moved to block Instagram after its parent company, Meta, said [it would allow calls for violence against Putin and Russian soldiers](#) involved in the invasion of Ukraine to appear on the social media platform. Russian prosecutors demanded that access to Instagram be blocked, and authorities [moved to recognise Meta as an “extremist organisation”](#).

The US has also imposed sanctions on a group of Russia's elite, including billionaire Viktor Vekselberg, three family members of Putin's spokesman and members of parliament.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 EU collectively rearm; become autonomous</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/eu-leaders-announce-intention-collectively-rearm-putin-threat-russia-ukraine">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/eu-leaders-announce-intention-collectively-rearm-putin-threat-russia-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>EU leaders have announced their intention to collectively rearm and become autonomous in food, energy and military hardware in a Versailles declaration that described Russia's war as “a tectonic shift in European history”.</p> <p>At a summit in the former royal palace, the 27 heads of state and government said on Friday that the <a href="#">invasion of Ukraine</a> had shown the urgent need for the EU to take responsibility for its own security and to rid itself of dependencies on others.</p> <p>Speaking at a press conference in the palace's Galerie des Batailles, in which France's military achievements are celebrated in painting and sculpture, France's Emmanuel Macron said the <a href="#">Versailles treaty of 1919</a> had divided Europe but that today leaders were uniting. He described Russia's aggression as a “tragic turning point”.</p> <p>“We can see how our food, our energy, our defence are all issues of sovereignty,” he said. “We want to be open to the world but we want to choose our partners and not depend on anybody.”</p> <p>He added: “The Versailles declaration is linked to the fact that sovereignty in <a href="#">Europe</a>, which might have been thought of by some as a slogan or a French fantasy, is seen by all today as crucial.”</p> <p>Macron defended the decision not to offer <a href="#">fast-track EU membership for Ukraine</a>, which was criticised overnight by the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy. “The answer is no,” Macron said of the request from the war-stricken country, but he added that the EU was mobilising all its economic power to help the Ukrainian government and that the “European path” was open.</p> <p>Lithuania's president, Gitanas Nausėda, said there was a “flavour of disappointment” to the decision for a number of EU member states but that the bloc would return to the issue.</p>

The Versailles declaration was said to be the “initiation” of European defence by Charles Michel, the European Council president.

The leaders agreed to “invest more and better in defence capabilities and innovative technologies” by substantially increasing defence expenditures and through tighter cooperation and coordination of their armed forces and procurement. While EU member states spend more than three times the Russian defence budget, there are limited tie-ups and multiple overlaps in capabilities.

The [European Commission](#) has been given a new role to find weaknesses in Europe’s defences and to advise on investment.

Macron said Olaf Scholz’s decision to set aside €100bn (£84bn) for defence and [Denmark’s decision](#) to put its opt-out on EU security mechanisms to a referendum showed the seriousness of the moment. The EU is also doubling its funding of military equipment destined for Ukraine to €1bn.

“About 10 days ago, [Germany decided to make historical investments](#) and Denmark made a historic choice deciding to ask the people if they want to come back to the European defence and security project,” Macron said. “Everywhere you look historic choices are being made.”

A deadline of 2027 has been set for freeing the EU from [dependency on Russian gas, oil and coal](#). In 2021, the EU imported 155bn cubic metres of natural gas from Russia, accounting for about 45% of its gas imports and close to 40% of the bloc’s total gas consumption.

Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, said the commission would produce proposals by mid-May on how to achieve the target. In order to prepare for next winter, plans will also be made to coordinate European countries’ fragmented network of gas stocks. Von der Leyen said in future underground stocks would have to be filled to at least 90% by the start of October each year.

Macron and Scholz are due to speak to [Vladimir Putin](#) in what the French president said would be a “demanding dialogue”, with the EU threatening tougher economic sanctions should Russia’s president make a move against Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital.

Shortly after leaders left Versailles, a new round of measures was [announced by the G7](#), with Von der Leyen citing the failure to respect agreements over humanitarian corridors as being a motivating factor.

Russia is being denied most-favoured-nation status for its markets under World Trade Organization rules, which will mean tariffs being imposed on its goods, and Moscow risks having its representatives thrown out of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

After some resistance from Italy, the EU is also banning exports of any luxury goods to Russia, “as a direct blow to the Russian elite”, Von der Leyen said.

“Those who sustain Putin’s war machine should no longer be able to enjoy their lavish lifestyle while bombs fall on innocent people in [Ukraine](#),” she added.

The EU will no longer import iron and steel goods from the Russian Federation and there will be a ban on European investments across Russia’s energy sector.

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HEADLINE	03/12 Day 17 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-17-of-the-russian-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-17-of-the-russian-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Satellite images show Russian forces are getting closer to Kyiv and appear to be firing artillery toward residential areas, Reuters has reported.</b> Air raid sirens were sounding in Kyiv in the early hours of Saturday morning, and there were reports of heavy shelling. Russian forces</li></ul>

bombarded cities across the country on Friday and appeared to be regrouping for a possible assault on Kyiv as Ukrainian president [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#) said his country had reached a “strategic turning point” in the conflict.

- **Zelenskiy accused Russia of hiring “murderers from Syria” after the Kremlin ramped up efforts to bring in reinforcements from the Middle East.** Syria’s military has begun recruiting troops from its own ranks to fight alongside Russian forces in [Ukraine](#), promising payments of \$3,000 a month – a sum up to 50 times a Syrian soldier’s monthly salary.
- **EU leaders plan to collectively rearm and become autonomous in food, energy and military hardware** in a declaration after their meeting at Versailles that described Russia’s war as [“a tectonic shift in European history”](#).
- **The UN security council met on Friday to discuss Moscow’s claims that the US is funding “military biological activities” in Ukraine.** The Russian ambassador to the UN, Vasily Nebenzya, invoked the [terrifying spectre of an “uncontrolled spread of bio agents from Ukraine”](#) across Europe. Both the US and Ukraine have categorically denied that they are developing any biological weapons inside the country.
- **The US has warned of the possibility of chemical or biological weapons being used by Russia.** Britain and the US have voiced fears Russia could be setting the stage to use a chemical weapon in [Ukraine](#), and using its accusations of bio-labs as pretext. US ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said: “Russia has a track record of falsely accusing other countries of the very violations that Russia itself is perpetrating.”
- **Russian airstrikes hit three cities in Ukraine on Friday – including two in the country’s west – as the scope of its military offensive widened.** [The raids hit](#) airfields in Lutsk and Ivano-Frankivsk, far from the main areas of conflict, and residential buildings in the strategically important city of Dnipro.
- **Hundreds of thousands of civilians remain trapped and under fire in Ukrainian cities, but the situation in Mariupol is especially dire.** Ten days into Russia’s siege, its population [has no access to electricity or mobile phone networks](#), and water and food are running out. 7,144 people were evacuated from four Ukrainian cities on Friday, [Zelenskiy](#) said in a televised address – a much lower number than managed to leave in each of the two previous days. Zelenskiy accused Russia of refusing to allow people out of Mariupol, and said [Ukraine](#) would try again to deliver food and medicines there on Saturday.
- **Ukraine fears Belarus might launch an invasion of Ukraine on Saturday after a meeting in Moscow between the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and his Belarusian counterpart, Alexander Lukashenko.** Ukraine accused Russia of firing at a Belarusian settlement near the border from Ukrainian airspace in an attempt to drag Belarus into the war.
- **A third Russian major general has been killed in Ukraine, western officials confirmed.** Western intelligence [estimates that about 20 major generals](#) would have been committed to the invasion, implying a relatively high casualty rate.
- **Joe Biden announced plans to ban the import of seafood, vodka and diamonds from Russia in retaliation for Putin’s war on Ukraine.** Biden said the ban would be part of a move by the US [to revoke normal trading relations with Russia](#). The US has also imposed sanctions on a group of Russia’s elite including billionaire Viktor Vekselberg, three relatives of Putin’s spokesperson, and lawmakers.
- **Russia has moved to block Instagram after its parent company, Meta, said it would allow calls for violence against Putin and Russian soldiers involved in the invasion of Ukraine to appear on the social media platform.** Russian prosecutors demanded that access to Instagram be blocked as authorities [moved to recognise Meta as an “extremist organisation”](#).
- **Deutsche Bank and Sony Pictures**, have joined the exodus of western businesses from Russia. In a [statement posted on its website](#), Deutsche Bank said it was “in the process of winding down our remaining business in Russia” and that there “won’t be any new business in Russia”.
- **The US has accused Russia of violating nuclear safety principles.** US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said the US is concerned about “Russia’s reckless actions and violations of nuclear safety principles” on Friday, including stopping supply to parts to nuclear facilities, concerns over conditions for staff, and damage to nuclear research facilities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Western intelligence agencies are investigating a cyber-attack by unidentified hackers.</b> The attack disrupted broadband satellite internet access in Ukraine coinciding with Russia's invasion, Reuters has reported, citing three people with direct knowledge of the incident.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine accused Russia of violating international law today by abducting the mayor of Melitopol, a Ukrainian city that fell under Russia's control during the invasion,</b> reports Reuters. Ukrainian officials said Melitopol mayor Ivan Fedorov was kidnapped after being falsely accused of terrorism.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Microsoft Wenatchee Valley data center</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/microsoft/microsofts-wenatchee-valley-data-center-begins-to-take-shape/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/microsoft/microsofts-wenatchee-valley-data-center-begins-to-take-shape/</a>
GIST	<p>EAST WENATCHEE — Work is well underway on a Microsoft data center and related electric substation north of Pangborn Memorial Airport.</p> <p>The substation for Microsoft's data center on Urban Industrial Way is being built by Douglas County PUD, said Meaghan Vibbert, spokesperson for the PUD.</p> <p>The cost to build the substation, which Vibbert declined to disclose, was covered by Microsoft. She said because Microsoft is a PUD customer, she couldn't share details of the project, except that it would be completed in early August. Works began in mid-2021.</p> <p>In March 2021, Vibbert told The Wenatchee World a substation, transmission line and other improvements would be built for \$24.9 million and paid for by Microsoft. The substation will have the capacity to provide up to 180 MW, PUD General Manager Gary Ivory said last year.</p> <p>Microsoft apparently spent \$19.3 million so far at that time to buy land. As of Wednesday, seven parcels of land, likely the same area, owned by Microsoft had an assessed market value in 2022 of \$13.2 million, according to the Douglas County Assessor's Office.</p> <p>Microsoft has maintained secrecy about its plans for what could be three buildings along Urban Industrial Way. It declined to give any details to The World on Wednesday.</p> <p>"Microsoft continues to invest in the greater Central Washington region," a spokesperson from the company said. "As data centers are large-scale and complex projects, we have no news to share at the moment, but will share an update as construction progresses."</p> <p>The Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority also didn't have much to say on any construction.</p> <p>"Unfortunately, all I can tell you is Microsoft is under construction and has a permit for one building," said Ron Cridlebaugh, director of economic development.</p> <p>In 2021, Microsoft applied for and was granted a permit to construct a more than 244,000-square-foot building valued by the company at \$409 million, according to the building permit application.</p> <p>Applications for the other two structures did not appear to be filed as of this week, but architectural renderings last year showed them to be about the same size as the first.</p> <p>The center could be an investment of more than \$1 billion in the next several years to construct a multiphase data-center campus.</p> <p>Microsoft's first building, if completed as proposed, would be worth twice as much as Douglas County's second-most-valuable property: the Sabey Corporation's data center down the street, according to assessor records.</p>



	<p>The East Wenatchee Water District is using the project as an opportunity to make already planned upgrades to its water infrastructure in the Pangborn industrial area, The World reported last year. Inquiries to the district for an update were not returned by press time.</p> <p>It successfully applied for a \$2.25 million low-interest loan and \$750,000 grant for the project from the state Department of Commerce's Community Economic Revitalization Board, or CERB, to build a pump station and reservoir. Microsoft will add \$12.5 million toward the construction, District Manager Vince Johnston said last year.</p> <p>The improvements will provide extra redundancy to the water-supply system and ensure there's enough flow to support firefighting efforts for the commercial structures, if it's ever needed. The 2 million-gallon reservoir will also allow for future growth in the area, Johnston said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Turkish-drones ominous sign for Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/us/politics/ukraine-military-drones-russia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/us/politics/ukraine-military-drones-russia.html</a>
GIST	<p>Ukraine's most sophisticated attack drone is about as stealthy as a crop duster: slow, low-flying and completely defenseless. So when the Russian invasion began, many experts expected the few drones that the Ukrainian forces managed to get off the ground would be shot down in hours.</p> <p>But more than two weeks into the conflict, Ukraine's drones — Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 models that buzz along at about half the speed of a Cessna — are not only still flying, they also <a href="#">shoot guided missiles</a> at Russian missile launchers, tanks and supply trains, according to Pentagon officials.</p> <p>The drones have become a sort of lumbering canary in the war's coal mine, a sign of the astonishing resiliency of the <a href="#">Ukrainian defense forces</a> and the larger problems that the Russians have encountered.</p> <p>"The performance of the Russian military has been shocking," said David A. Deptula, a retired three-star Air Force general who planned the U.S. air campaigns in Afghanistan in 2001 and the Persian Gulf in 1991. "Their failure to secure air superiority has been reflected by their slow and ponderous actions on the ground. Conversely, the Ukrainian air force performing better than expected has been a big boost to the morale of the entire country."</p> <p>The people of Ukraine are <a href="#">singing songs</a> about the Bayraktar drone and repeatedly <a href="#">posting online footage</a> of <a href="#">destroyed Russian armor</a>. They have <a href="#">given the name Bayraktar to a lemur</a> born last week at the zoo in Kyiv, the capital.</p> <p>A senior Pentagon official confirmed that Ukrainian forces had successfully used armed Bayraktars to carry out several attacks on the huge <a href="#">Russian military convoy</a> that has been making its way toward Kyiv.</p> <p>The drones have also been used for reconnaissance, hunting for targets for Ukrainian ground troops. The Pentagon official said he could not confirm the authenticity of videos posted online that purported to show Bayraktar airstrikes.</p> <p>Before Russia invaded Ukraine, Bayraktar TB2s were already punching above their weight. The drones, with a 39-foot wingspan, are assembled in Turkey but rely extensively on electronics made in the United States and Canada. A growing number of countries in Africa, the Middle East and Europe have bought them because, at about \$2 million apiece, they are much cheaper than manned combat aircraft.</p> <p>In recent years, TB2s have been used to attack targets in Syria, Libya and <a href="#">Nagorno-Karabakh</a> — each time against opponents armed with Russian-made tanks and anti-aircraft systems, and each time landing devastating blows on enemy ground forces.</p> <p>But military planners and civilian experts cautioned that the drones — which have no self-defense systems, are easily spotted by radar and cruise at only about 80 miles an hour — would be sitting ducks for</p>



Russia's many-layered air defense system. Russian forces have long-range cruise missiles that can destroy the drones on the ground, short-range missile systems that can easily knock them out of the air, and electronic jammers that can block the drones' communications, leaving them to drop lifeless from the sky.

"Even with the drones' record of success, everyone expected that, once they really faced the full gamut of Russian defenses, they would stand no chance," said Lauren Kahn, who studies drone warfare at the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations. Their survival and continued use "is really raising questions about the Russians' capabilities," she said.

Pentagon officials remain puzzled by the Russians' failure to dominate the skies over Ukraine, at least so far. Moscow built up sophisticated missile defenses and air power on Ukraine's borders, but it has not been using them effectively to complement its ground forces, U.S. officials and analysts said. And Ukrainian air defenses have been surprisingly effective at downing Russian aircraft.

"We aren't seeing the level of integration between air and ground operations that you would expect to see," John F. Kirby, the chief Pentagon spokesman, said on Monday. "Not everything they're doing on the ground is fully being supported by what they're doing in the air. There does seem to be some disconnect there."

Ukraine's success at keeping Russia from dominating its airspace not only allows the country to fly its drones, it also limits Russia's ability to send drones to hunt for the small teams of Ukrainian ground troops who have used shoulder-fired missiles and other weapons to knock out hundreds of Russian vehicles.

"It is so perplexing, and no one is quite sure what went wrong," said Samuel Bendett, an expert on the Russian military at the Center for a New American Security, a Washington-based research group. "Russia has a large number of drones, and the assumption was they would be using them for strikes," he said. "That assumption has been completely undone."

The Russian forces seemed to be using drones very little so far, Mr. Bendett said, perhaps because they are afraid the drones will be shot down with Ukraine's air space still contested.

Without air superiority, the Russian offensive has been bogged down, claiming little new territory in recent days while losses mount. The Pentagon estimated on Wednesday that 5,000 to 6,000 Russian troops had been killed, and observers said the number of tanks, missile launchers and trucks that Russia had lost ran [into the hundreds](#).

At the start of the war, Ukraine had five to 20 Bayraktar TB2s in service. Russia claims to have shot down several of them, and it is unclear how many remain. Still, Ukraine continues to release video images that appear to show the drones destroying Russian vehicles.

Air superiority is seen as a critical first step in modern warfare, and armed forces spend a great deal of time and money trying to ensure that they can quickly dominate the skies when fighting starts. Strategists studying Russia assumed that it would immediately use missile strikes to destroy Ukraine's air force and surface-to-air missile batteries before they could be used, and then move in scores of fighter jets, radar jammers and missile trucks to take control of Ukraine's air space. With air superiority established, Russia could freely use its fighters, bombers and drones to annihilate the Ukrainian military.

That has not happened.

In the first days of the invasion, the Russian military appeared to hold back much of its air power, perhaps assuming that the Ukrainian military would not put up much of a fight. Instead, Russian forces met stiff resistance; when they tried to move in mobile missile launchers and electronic warfare vehicles to control the airspace, the convoys were ambushed by Ukrainians before they could reach the fight.

"It's certainly not the way we would prosecute an air campaign," said Michael Kofman, the director of Russia studies at C.N.A., a defense research institute in Arlington, Va.

“But then again, this war didn’t start the way the Russian military organizes and trains to fight, either,” he said. “It was a bungled regime-change operation that became a war they didn’t really plan for.”

But lack of a quick victory for Russia did not mean victory for Ukraine, Mr. Kofman added, noting that Ukraine continues to lose aircraft to Russian missiles, and that it was not possible to glean the true state of the air war from official statements and news reports alone.

Paradoxically, experts say, Ukraine’s early success in the skies may only prolong the war and increase the destruction, as the much larger Russian military appears to be shifting from precision strikes to [widespread shelling and bombing](#) of civilian neighborhoods.

Russia is believed to still have forces in reserve that it could use to try to establish the air superiority that it fumbled at the start. Defense officials say few Ukrainian aircraft are now flying, and they must pick their targets carefully to avoid areas where strong Russian defenses might shoot them down.

For the time being, Ukraine’s drones are still flying, U.S. defense officials say. And on Thursday, [video footage appeared on social media](#) claiming that one of the Bayraktar drones had destroyed a Russian mobile missile launcher — exactly the kind of expensive, sophisticated weapon system that Russia fielded to wipe out the inexpensive drones that had destroyed it instead.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 US officials: superyacht could be Putin’s</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/us/politics/putin-yacht-russia-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/us/politics/putin-yacht-russia-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — American officials are examining the ownership of a \$700 million superyacht currently in a dry dock at an Italian seacoast town, and believe it could be associated with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, according to multiple people briefed on the information.</p> <p>United States intelligence agencies have made no final conclusions about the ownership of the superyacht — called the Scheherazade — but American officials said they had found initial indications that it was linked to Mr. Putin. The information from the U.S. officials came after The New York Times reported on Tuesday that Italian authorities were looking into the 459-foot long vessel’s ownership and that a former crew member said it was for the use of Mr. Putin.</p> <p>People briefed on the intelligence would not describe what information they had that indicated the superyacht is associated with Mr. Putin. If American officials know whether or how often Mr. Putin uses the yacht, the people briefed on the information would not share it.</p> <p>American officials said Mr. Putin kept little of his wealth in his own name. Instead he uses homes and boats nominally owned by Russian oligarchs. Still, it is possible that through various shell companies, Mr. Putin could have more direct control of the Scheherazade.</p> <p>Throughout the coronavirus pandemic Mr. Putin has also spent large amounts of time in the Russian resort city of Sochi on the Black Sea, U.S. officials said. The Scheherazade made trips to Sochi in the summers of 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>Both the Treasury Department’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis and the Navy’s Office of Naval Intelligence are investigating the ownership of superyachts associated with Russian oligarchs. A spokesman for the Navy and a spokeswoman for the Treasury both declined to comment.</p> <p>The Justice Department has set up a task force to go after the assets of sanctioned Russian oligarchs. In a discussion with reporters on Friday, a Justice Department official said the task force would be investigating individuals who help sanctioned Russian officials or oligarchs hide their assets. Those individuals could face charges related to sanctions violations or international money laundering charges.</p>

In addition, under recently published Commerce Department rule changes, if more than 25 percent of a plane or a yacht is made of U.S.-manufactured airplane or marine parts, it cannot go to Russia.

If a yacht is in a foreign country and meets the definition of a U.S.-origin or U.S.-made product, it would need a license to go to Russia. To actually seize a yacht, the United States would need to coordinate with a cooperative foreign government — Italy, in the case of the Scheherazade — to prevent the ship from moving to Russian waters.

Some superyachts moved out of European waters as the invasion of Ukraine began and the West began imposing sanctions allowing asset seizures. The Scheherazade is undergoing repairs in Marina di Carrara, a port in Tuscany, and as of earlier this week was in dry dock, unable to get underway.

Guy Bennett-Pearce, the Scheherazade's captain, said earlier this week that Mr. Putin was not the owner of the superyacht and that the Russian president had not set foot on it.

He declined to give the name of the owner, saying on Monday only that it was not anyone facing sanctions. Captain Bennett-Pearce did not answer his phone on Friday or respond to a text message.

Last week, Italian authorities boarded the Scheherazade and examined certification documents, seeking to learn more about the vessel's ownership. Captain Bennett-Pearce said earlier this week that he would provide the Italian police with documents that divulged the yacht's owner.

Italian authorities said they were taking a deep look at the Scheherazade. Under a process that may take as long as a couple of weeks, Italy's financial police will gather evidence and present it to a government committee, which will then decide whether ownership or use of the ship is connected to someone on the sanctions list.

That connection could be outright ownership of a significant portion of the ship, or evidence that a friend, underling or associate lent his or her name to hide the sanctioned person's ownership, or that funds used to buy the ship came from illegal profits. If the committee finds that the evidence meets the threshold, the financial police can impound the Scheherazade.

[The Italian Sea Group](#), which owns the shipyard where the Scheherazade is dry-docked, said in a statement on Thursday that based on documents it had and "checks carried out by the relevant authorities," the Scheherazade "is not attributable to the property of Russian President Vladimir Putin."

American officials have been stepping up their examination of the superyachts of Russian oligarchs, particularly as the United States and Europe have imposed more sanctions against the wealthy families that support Mr. Putin.

The German-built Scheherazade has been in service since June 2020. The website [SuperYachtFan](#) estimated that it cost \$700 million. The ship has a full-size gym, two helicopter decks and gold-plated fixtures in the washrooms.

While American intelligence officials have been looking at the Scheherazade, the scrutiny has increased after the publication of the earlier article in The Times.

The Scheherazade appears to have a sister ship, the [Crescent](#), built by the same German manufacturer and put into service in 2018. The Crescent's project name when it was under construction was "[Thunder](#)." The Scheherazade's was "[Lightning](#)."

Like the Scheherazade, there is no public information identifying the ship's owner, other than an offshore shell company. The Crescent last broadcast its position on Nov. 2, when it appeared to be approaching Barcelona, Spain. Satellite images show that as of March 4 it was moored at a marina [catering to superyachts](#) near there. Both vessels are registered in the Cayman Islands and both share the same [designer](#).

HEADLINE	03/12 Cautious emerging after 2yrs of pandemic
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/two-grueling-years-later-world-takes-cautious-steps-forward/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/two-grueling-years-later-world-takes-cautious-steps-forward/</a>
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — With COVID-19 case numbers plummeting, Emily Safrin did something she hadn't done since the pandemic began two years ago: She put her fears aside and went to a concert.</p> <p>The fully vaccinated and boosted restaurant server planned to keep her mask on, but as the reggaeton star Bad Bunny took the stage and the energy in the crowd soared, she ripped it off. Soon after, she was strolling unmasked in a trendy Portland neighborhood with friends.</p> <p>Two years after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, changing the world overnight, relief and hope are creeping back in after a long, dark period of loss, fear and deep uncertainty about the future.</p> <p>“Everyone was supposed to be vaccinated or have a negative test, and I said, ‘What the heck, I’m just gonna live my life,’” Safrin said of her concert experience. “It was overwhelming, to be honest, but it also felt great to be able to just feel a little bit normal again.”</p> <p>The world is finally emerging from a brutal stretch of winter dominated by the highly contagious omicron variant, bringing a sense of relief on the two-year anniversary of the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>It was March 11, 2020 when the WHO issued its declaration, driving home the severity of the threat faced by a virus that at that point had wreaked havoc primarily in Italy and China. The U.S. had 38 confirmed coronavirus deaths and 1,300 cases nationwide on that date, but reality was starting to sink in: stocks tanked, classrooms started closing and people began donning masks. In a matter of hours, the NBA was canceling games, Chicago’s huge St. Patrick’s Day parade was scuttled and late-night comedians began filming from empty studios — or even their homes.</p> <p>Since then, more than 6 million people have died globally, nearly 1 million in the U.S. Millions have been thrown out of work, students have endured three school years of disruptions. The emergence of the vaccine in December 2021 saved countless lives but political divisions, hesitancy and inequality in health systems have kept millions of people around the world from getting inoculated, prolonging the pandemic.</p> <p>The situation is improving, however.</p> <p>Hospitalizations of people with COVID-19 have plummeted 80% in the last six weeks across the U.S. since a mid-January pandemic peak, dropping to the lowest levels since July 2021, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Case counts have followed the same trend line to the lowest counts since last summer as well. Even the death tally, which typically lags behind cases and hospitalizations, has slowed significantly in the last month.</p> <p>In its latest pandemic report, the WHO said infections and deaths are down across the globe, with only one region — the Western Pacific — seeing a rise in cases. The Middle East and Africa saw cases drop by 46% and 40%, respectively.</p> <p>Another positive: The omicron wave and vaccinations have left enough people with protection against the coronavirus that future spikes will likely require much less disruption to society, experts say.</p> <p>Nowhere is the shift in the pandemic more apparent than in the nation’s hospitals, where critical care units were overflowing with desperately ill patients just months ago.</p>

Julie Kim, chief nursing officer at Providence St. Jude Medical Center in Fullerton, California, gets emotional when she recalls the bleakest days of the pandemic when doctors and nurses worked around the clock and didn't go home because they were afraid of bringing the virus back with them.

At one point during the summer 2020 spike, there were 250 COVID-19 patients in the hospital licensed for 320 beds and the hospital had to use offices for overflow bed space.

The pandemic has eased to the point that as of Tuesday, there were just four COVID-19 patients at the hospital, Kim said, and medical staff feels more prepared to treat the disease with the knowledge gained in those darkest days. Still, many are traumatized by the raw memories of the past two years and will never be the same, she said.

"It's hard to use the word 'normal,' because I don't think we will ever get back to a pre-COVID state. We are adapting and we are moving forward," Kim said. "This has had a toll on many of us. Some people are moving forward and some people are still having a hard time dealing with it all."

Mask mandates, vaccine requirements and other COVID-19 measures are being eliminated everywhere. The last statewide mask mandate in the U.S., in Hawaii, will end in two weeks.

But health experts are also urging some caution.

Dr. Albert Ko, an infectious-disease physician and epidemiologist at the Yale School of Public Health, said it's certainly good news that the U.S. seems to be at the tail end of a peak. But he cautioned against any victory declarations, especially with the potential of another variant lurking around the corner.

"We have new variants emerge and those new variants fuel large waves, epidemic waves," Ko said. "The big question is, are they going to be as mild or less severe as omicron? Are they going to be potentially more severe? Unfortunately, I can't predict that."

In Portland, people are heading back to movie theaters, concerts and gyms after a long, dark winter and bars and restaurants are filling up once more. Safrin said many customers are telling her it's their first time dining inside in months.

Kalani Pa, who owns an Anytime Fitness franchise with his wife in the Portland suburbs, said the past two years almost drove him out of business — but with Oregon's mask mandate ending Friday, his small gym is suddenly coming to life again. The franchise signed three new members on one day alone this week and a coffee shop opened this week next to the gym in a space that sat vacant for months, driving up foot traffic.

"Sometimes things have got to get worse before they get better," Pa said before rushing off to give a tour to a new member.

Demand for testing is down, too.

Jaclyn Chavira remembers the fear on peoples' faces as they lined up by the thousands in Los Angeles to be tested during the late 2020 surge, which triggered an astonishing 250,000 infections and more than 3,000 deaths a day across the U.S. at the peak.

Infections raced out of control for weeks and some days the line of cars at the Dodger Stadium test site, one of the largest in the nation, stretched for nearly two miles.

At the height of the omicron surge, Chavira's nonprofit called CORE did 94,000 tests a week at 10 sites in Los Angeles County. Last week, they conducted about 3,400 and most of them were for work or travel requirements — not because the person was sick, she said.

"You can sense the relief," said Chavira.

	<p>Not everyone, however, is ready to dive back in. Many remember last year when mask rules eased and COVID-19 seemed to be loosening its grip only to come roaring back as the delta and omicron variants took hold.</p> <p>Amber Pierce, who works in a Portland bar-restaurant, was out of work for almost a year due to COVID-related layoffs and narrowly dodged an infection herself when the virus swept through her workplace. A regular customer died during this winter's peak, she said.</p> <p>She still wears a mask even when outdoors and was eating pizza outside on a recent day only because her brother was visiting for the first time in more than a year.</p> <p>"I'm going to make sure that there's not a spike once those masks come off and everyone starts, you know, feeling comfortable," she said, as she applied hand sanitizer.</p> <p>"It's still the anxiety of it," she said. "Either way, it's going to hit you whether you get really sick or not."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 King Co. eyes 'next phase of coexistence'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/king-county-health-officials-shift-covid-response-to-next-phase-of-coexistence/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/king-county-health-officials-shift-covid-response-to-next-phase-of-coexistence/</a>
GIST	<p>As King County emerges from the recent wave of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, fueled by the omicron variant, public health leaders are refocusing their attention on bolstering long-term strategies for fighting the virus, particularly ones targeting air ventilation.</p> <p>The shift in priorities comes as Washingtonians prepare for the end of the statewide indoor mask mandate <a href="#">at the end of Friday</a>, though face coverings will still be required in some settings, like hospitals, dentist offices, nursing homes and on public transit.</p> <p>King County health officer Dr. Jeff Duchin said Friday that while he thinks it's generally safe to be maskless outdoors, he reminded residents it's "very reasonable" for people to continue masking up inside, particularly in crowded, poorly ventilated spaces.</p> <p>"COVID-19 is still circulating and some risk remains, especially for people with weakened immune systems from disease or medications, people with certain underlying health conditions that place them at increased risk for severe disease, advanced age and those who are unvaccinated and unboosted," Duchin said.</p> <p>He also asked residents not to throw masks away once the statewide mandate lifts, in case the region sees another surge.</p> <p>Over the last seven days, King County has averaged 220 cases per day, down from a peak of about 6,660 cases in mid-January, according to the county's COVID-19 data dashboard. About six people are hospitalized for COVID every day, Duchin added, compared to about 60 per day in January.</p> <p>"(Hospitalization rates) are now comparable to levels we saw just before the omicron surge and just before the delta surge last spring," Duchin said.</p> <p>Hospital capacity is also improving. King County hospitals are reporting that COVID patients are occupying less than 5% of staffed inpatient beds, compared to occupying 21% of beds during the height of the omicron variant's surge through the region.</p> <p>Unvaccinated COVID patients continue to represent a "disproportionate" number of COVID patients and are about 13 times more likely to be hospitalized compared to someone who's vaccinated and boosted, Duchin said.</p>



In King County, 93% of eligible residents have received at least one shot of the COVID vaccine, while about 85% are fully vaccinated.

Ongoing staffing shortages and a high volume of other patients, however, continue to challenge health care systems, he added.

Still, the county and state are pushing forward into the “next phase of coexistence with COVID,” Duchin said, which includes prioritizing long-term strategies like improving indoor air quality in homes, businesses and schools.

To date, public health teams have provided in-person ventilation assessments to more than 100 King County schools and child care centers and distributed more than 6,000 HEPA air filters to homeless shelters, schools, child care centers, faith-based organizations and small businesses, he said.

The county is also offering free webinars on ventilation to small businesses and organizations.

“It’s critical to take advantage of this lull in COVID-19 activity to improve our preparedness for future surges,” Duchin said. “And I encourage everyone to do what you can to make improvements wherever possible to indoor ventilation.”

Other “system-level strategies” aimed at reducing virus risk in the long-term include providing access to testing and sick leave to workers, continuing efforts to make vaccination and booster shots accessible and ensuring access to high-quality masks whenever they’re necessary.

“(The end of the mask mandate) does not mean that the COVID-19 pandemic is over,” he said. “It does not mean COVID-19 is no longer a problem.”

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HEADLINE	03/11 ‘Ghost trucks’ move concrete during strike?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/companies-use-ghost-truck-workaround-move-concrete-during-strike/7XPNNNVK6JFEDOQQXVH7FSJJRI/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/companies-use-ghost-truck-workaround-move-concrete-during-strike/7XPNNNVK6JFEDOQQXVH7FSJJRI/</a>
GIST	<p>Teamsters organizers say they’re further away from reaching a deal than ever before with six Seattle-area concrete companies. A new problem is dividing the two parties, what Local 147 is calling “ghost trucks.”</p> <p>“We call them ‘ghost trucks’ because they have no logos on them, oftentimes no license plates, no DOT number,” says Jamie Fleming with Local 147.</p> <p>According to the Teamsters, not just anyone can hop behind the wheel of a mixer truck. Drivers must adjust the speed of the drum as road conditions change.</p> <p>Fleming says, if you don’t get that load in the ground within 90 minutes, the concrete will harden.</p> <p>“These big projects are going to really regret the decision to use this poor quality concrete because they’re going to have to end up redoing it. It’s going to crack in a few years,” argues Fleming.</p> <p>Projects like Sound Transit’s light rail have been using the nonunion concrete. Chris Elwell, Sound Transit’s Director of Labor Compliances, says it’s a decision out of their hands. Contractors decide what concrete is used. Elwell wants to assure those concerned that every load is rigorously tested by professional inspectors.</p> <p>“They’re testing for consistency. They’re testing for strength,” says Elwell.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/11 Indoor mask mandate ends; not everywhere
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/indoor-mask-mandate-end-friday-night-not-everywhere/O57NE7MENFEIRLTZCHBOKSMOEE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/indoor-mask-mandate-end-friday-night-not-everywhere/O57NE7MENFEIRLTZCHBOKSMOEE/</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — To mask or not to mask? That is the question Washingtonians will have to answer on their own beginning midnight Saturday as the state indoor mask mandate will be no more.</p> <p>The end of the mask mandate is a milestone that many see differently.</p> <p>“I’m really excited about it. I think it’s going to be a positive step in the right direction,” said Jackly Barnhoum.</p> <p>She and Aiden Bradner said it will encourage more people to go out.</p> <p>“People are done with it. They just want to see each others’ faces, smile, interact with each other socially, so, I think we’re all ready for it,” Bradner said.</p> <p>At Henry’s Gymnasium, KIRO 7 heard from people who plan to keep wearing their masks.</p> <p>“I’m going to be keeping my mask on anytime I’m out in public, indoors,” said Sonny Nguyen, an employee with the gym.</p> <p>Starting Saturday, workers at the gym will still be required to wear masks; however, members will have the option of ditching them while they work out.</p> <p>“I’m happy to see its being relaxed, (but) I will probably continue to wear mine,” a gym member said.</p> <p>As for federal mask requirements, those traveling on planes, ferries, trains and buses will still need to keep one on.</p> <p>“If you’re not wearing a mask the bus driver does notify you to put one on,” said Jody Allen when asked about riding public transit.</p> <p>King County Metro tracks rider mask use by reviewing onboard video and said 90.4% of people wore masks on buses and shuttles in February and 100% wore masks on the water taxi.</p> <p>“I will continue to mask in crowded indoor spaces,” said Dr. Jeff Duchin of Public Health - Seattle &amp; King County.</p> <p>Duchin said the drop in new cases does not mean COVID-19 is over.</p> <p>“It remains very reasonable for individuals to make the choice to continue to mask in indoor settings based on their personal risk assessment and preferences,” Duchin said.</p> <p>Governor Jay Inslee had originally planned to lift the mask mandate March 21 but moved the date up.</p> <p>Many other states had already relaxed their rules.</p> <p>“I was actually surprised since I flew in from California today that it was still in effect because California from my experience has been one of the most strict states,” Alicia Nguyen said.</p> <p>TSA announced Thursday it is extending its mask mandate to April 18.</p> <p>TSA said the extension is needed so the CDC can develop a policy for airplanes when it comes to COVID-19 and masking.</p> <p>Masks have been blamed for recent disturbances on airplanes. According to the FAA, nearly 3/4 of airplane incidents were because of disputes over masks.</p>

	Supporters of the elimination of the mask mandate said ending it will help prevent those types of disturbances.
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Tacoma PD hiring incentives: up to \$25,000</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/tacoma-police-announce-hiring-incentives-of-up-to-25000">https://www.q13fox.com/news/tacoma-police-announce-hiring-incentives-of-up-to-25000</a>
GIST	<p><b>TACOMA, Wash.</b> - In an effort to combat a rise in crime and a local and national shortage of officers, the <a href="#">Tacoma Police Department</a> announced that it would be offering new hiring incentives.</p> <p>Beginning March 14, the department will offer a <a href="#">\$25,000 incentive to qualified lateral hires</a> who join the department. New lateral hires will receive \$10,000 in their first paycheck, \$7,500 after completing their probationary period and another \$7,500 after being in service for a year.</p> <p>The Tacoma Police Department also <a href="#">launched a new hiring website</a> to get this effort underway. The website, themed "reflect and protect", encourages all new and experienced officers to apply, and focuses specifically on the diversity of Tacoma, TPD said.</p> <p>The hiring bonus for law enforcement in <a href="#">Tacoma</a> is one of the largest in the state so far.</p> <p>In Seattle, after initially saying there were no funds for SPD hiring bonuses, the city council passed legislation that approves \$220,000 for the hiring of dispatchers and officers.</p> <p>Similar to Tacoma, months before her term ended, former mayor Jenny Durkan <a href="#">issued an executive order which authorized a hiring bonus of up to \$25,000</a> for lateral SPD hires, and up to \$10,000 for new hires, depending on experience.</p> <p>That executive order expired and the council had to pass new legislation for bonuses.</p> <p>King County, on the other hand, is <a href="#">paying commissioned employees a \$4,000 bonus</a> to stay with the department through the end of 2022.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Health officer: CDC risk map too lenient</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/king-county-health-officer-cdc-covid-risk-map-may-be-too-lenient">https://www.q13fox.com/news/king-county-health-officer-cdc-covid-risk-map-may-be-too-lenient</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - On the <a href="#">eve of Washington state lifting its mask mandate</a> except in special circumstances, King County's Public Health Officer, Dr. Jeff Duchin, says you may not want to ditch the mask.</p> <p>Duchin also raised questions about the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) oversimplified risk assessment map people are using to make their COVID-19 decisions.</p> <p>"I am concerned with thresholds being too high," Duchin said during a briefing on Friday.</p> <p>The thresholds he is referring to involve the matrix that makes up the <a href="#">CDC's Community Risk Assessment</a> for each county in the country.</p> <p>The assessment is "a new toll to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data," the CDC says on its website. The levels are coded into the colors, <a href="#">green, yellow and orange</a> and are based on hospital beds being used, patients admitted to hospitals with COVID and the total number of COVID cases in an area.</p> <p>Asotin County, in the southeastern corner of the state, is the only county set at level orange by the CDC. In that county, the CDC is recommending everyone wear a mask indoors.</p>

But Duchin suggests the hospitalization rate threshold may be too lenient, meaning the hospitalization rate to any of the color-coded areas should be lowered.

"I am a bit concerned about what seems to be a high hospitalization rate for triggering the implementation of community measures like masking," he said. "I think a seven-day new hospitalization rate of between 10 and 20 per 100,000 is a bit high".

He said a hospitalization rate of 10 per 100,000 would be the highest weekly rate of the last 12 flu seasons. [Pierce County is one of nine counties the CDC rated as yellow](#), meaning people at high-risk should consider wearing a mask and take other precautions.

"We don't believe that [data is correct on the CDC's community-level site](#)," said Naomi Wilson, the Assessment Manager for Pierce County Health.

The metric that puts Pierce County into the yellow category is the same metric Duchin believes may be set too high: hospitalization rates. Wilson said her agency is working with the Washington State Department of Health to get updated information to the CDC.

She says the [county's hospitalization rates](#) are improving as more people with COVID are moved out of hospitals and into alternative care facilities.

"We are pretty optimistic that trend is going to continue and very soon that we will be at a low CDC risk level," said Wilson.

When asked by FOX 13 if King County will be scaling back vaccination and testing sites in light of the lifting of the mask mandate and improving numbers, Duchin says there is a plan to "pivot," but did not say what that meant or when that would happen.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 What passed, didn't 2022 legislative session</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/2022-wa-legislative-session-what-passed-and-what-didnt">https://www.q13fox.com/news/2022-wa-legislative-session-what-passed-and-what-didnt</a>
GIST	<p><b>OLYMPIA, Wash.</b> - Washington state lawmakers worked until nearly the last minute this week, <a href="#">adjourning their 60-day legislative session</a> shortly after approving a \$64.1 billion supplemental state budget.</p> <p>Lawmakers adjourned just before midnight Thursday, the last day of session, after taking final votes on the adjustments to boost spending on the <a href="#">current two-year budget that runs through mid-2023 by \$5 billion</a>.</p> <p>Like last year, much of the session was done in a hybrid fashion, with some lawmakers on the floor and some participating remotely due to the pandemic. The numbers of lawmakers allowed in each chamber increased throughout session as COVID-19 cases dropped in the state, and the public was once again allowed into the public galleries overlooking the chambers a few weeks ago.</p> <p>After the <a href="#">Legislature adjourned</a>, Gov. Jay Inslee credited lawmakers with delivering "big, bold, action" on areas ranging from budget spending to address homelessness to a transportation package that has a large focus on transit.</p> <p>Democratic House Speaker Laurie Jenkins said, "I think we accomplished much more in a 60-day session than anyone would have expected."</p> <p>But House Republican Leader J.T. Wilcox expressed frustration on what he called a "closed process" on things like the transportation revenue package — which has been bipartisan in prior years — and on the lack of across-the-board tax cuts for the middle class considering the strong revenues the state has seen over the past year, not including the more than \$1 billion in unspent federal pandemic relief funds used in</p>

the budget. While there was a tax cut for small businesses, calls for a cut to the state sales tax or property taxes were not included.

"I think people are generally aware that there was a ton of extra money out there and they didn't get any of it," he said.

Here's a look at [some other measures that passed, and some that did not](#).

**PASSED:**

**TRANSPORTATION REVENUE PACKAGE:** The nearly \$17 billion, 16-year transportation revenue package spends on projects across the state, ranging from building new hybrid electric ferries and funding more walking and biking corridors, to highway maintenance and replacing fish passage culverts. Funding is also provided to ensure that those age 18 and younger can ride for free on public transportation.

**POLICE REFORM:** Washington's ambitious package of police reform legislation, adopted last year in the wake of 2020's national uproar over George Floyd's murder, needed clarifying. Aspects of the reforms left police uncertain over whether they could detain people who flee investigatory stops, whether they could use force to bring people in crisis to get mental health help, and whether they could still use less-lethal beanbag shotguns, which seemed to be accidentally prohibited by the wording of a ban on military weapons for law enforcement. Lawmakers this year passed bills answering each in the affirmative, over objections from police accountability groups who did not want to give officers the ability to use force during investigatory stops. Another measure, loosening restrictions on police car chases, stalled in the Senate on the final day of session.

**DELAY TO LONG-TERM CARE PROGRAM:** Lawmakers moved quickly to delay and make some adjustments to the state's new long-term care program. Inslee signed the measure into law at the end of January, which means that the payroll tax that was supposed to start being collected by employers in January is delayed until July 2023, and access to the benefit to pay for things like in-home care, home modifications like wheelchair ramps and rides to the doctor is now delayed from Jan. 1, 2025, until July 1, 2026. Lawmakers also allowed people born before 1968 who are not fully vested in the program to qualify for partial benefits. The lifetime maximum of the benefit is \$36,500, with annual increases to be determined based on inflation. Supporters say the program is critical, and that most people will need help with long-term care at some point in their life. More than 473,000 with private plans had already opted out of the program, so the delay gives lawmakers time to address long-term solvency concerns and address other criticisms about the benefit, including its lack of portability if someone moves out of state.

**CAP ON INSULIN COSTS:** The cost of a 30-day supply of insulin will drop to \$35 for one year, starting next year, under a measure Inslee signed into law last week. The current out-of-pocket limit for a 30-day supply of insulin has been \$100 since January 2021, under a law passed by the Washington Legislature in 2020. That law is set to expire on Jan. 1, 2023, which is when the new law takes effect. The new limit and extension, which ends on Jan. 1, 2024, is meant to give more time for a work group created in 2020 to finish its work to come up with a long-term solution for insulin costs.

**GUN RESTRICTIONS:** Lawmakers approved the prohibition of the manufacture, distribution and sale of firearm magazines that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition, legislation that was requested by Democratic Attorney General Bob Ferguson. They also passed a measure that prohibits weapons at ballot counting sites and school board meetings across the state. That bill also bans openly carried firearms at local government meetings and election-related facilities like county election offices, though people who have concealed pistol licenses would be allowed to carry their concealed weapon.

**MOTION PICTURE INCENTIVE.** In an effort to lure more projects to the state, lawmakers voted to expand the state's incentive program. The bill increases the total amount of tax credits for productions from \$3.5 million a year to \$15 million. It also raises the maximum tax credit for an individual project from \$750,000 to \$1 million a year.

**DIED:**

**GUBERNATORIAL POWER REFORM:** It's been more than two years since Inslee declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and Republicans pushed to limit the amount of time a declaration could stay in place without legislative approval. A Senate measure, sponsored by a Democrat, authorized legislative leaders to terminate an emergency after 90 days if the Legislature is not in session. Republicans said it was a watered down bill that wouldn't have done anything, and even Inslee said it wouldn't affect the state's COVID-19 response after the bill passed the Senate. The measure was brought up for a vote during an overnight session in the House but Democrats ultimately pulled the bill shortly after debate started.

**ELECTION LIES:** A bill sought by Inslee that would have made it a crime for elected officials or candidates to knowingly lie about election outcomes if those claims result in violence passed a Senate committee but was not brought up for a vote from the full Senate.

**MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING:** Another priority of the governor's, a bill to expand where housing supply like duplexes and other types of "middle housing" could be built, died in the House. Another bill to boost accessory dwelling units like backyard cottages statewide cleared the House but died in the Senate.

**ELECTRIC CAR REBATE:** Senate and House budget writers did not include money for a proposal by the governor to offer rebates of \$7,500 for new electric vehicles and \$5,000 for used ones.

**RENT INCREASES:** A bill that would have required a landlord to give a tenant six-month notice for any rent increase of 7.5% or higher cleared a House committee but was never brought up for a floor vote.

**REDISTRICTING TRANSPARENCY:** A measure that sought to create more transparency around the state's redistricting process following last year's chaotic final hours of work that led to complaints its deliberations may have violated open meetings laws unanimously passed the Senate but died in the House. The measure would have required the redistricting commission to make plans publicly available 72 hours prior to voting, and that any amendments be debated and voted on publicly.

**SYNTHETICALLY DERIVED THC:** Since Congress authorized hemp-growing in the 2018 federal Farm Bill, processors around the country have exploited a perceived loophole to extract CBD, a non-impairing compound, and chemically convert it into impairing THC, which has been sold without regulation or age restrictions at gas stations, convenience stores and vape shops. At least 17 states have taken steps to ban such sales, but dueling efforts in the Washington Legislature failed this year amid disagreement over how much authority the Liquor and Cannabis Board should have – and whether the synthetically derived THC should be allowed in Washington's legal cannabis stores.

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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	03/14 Shamoon APT link to Kwampirs malware?
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/03/researchers-find-new-evidence-linking.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/03/researchers-find-new-evidence-linking.html</a>
GIST	<p>New findings released last week showcase the overlapping source code and techniques between the operators of <a href="#">Shamoon</a> and <a href="#">Kwampirs</a>, indicating that they "are the same group or really close collaborators."</p> <p>"Research evidence shows identification of co-evolution between both Shamoon and Kwampirs malware families during the known timeline," Pablo Rincón Crespo of Cylera Labs <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p>"If Kwampirs is based on the original Shamoon, and Shamoon 2 and 3 campaign code is based on Kwampirs, [...] then the authors of Kwampirs would be potentially the same as the authors of Shamoon, or must have a very strong relationship, as has been seen over the course of many years," Rincón Crespo added.</p>



Shamoon, also known as DistTrack, functions as an information-stealing malware that also incorporates a destructive component that allows it to overwrite the Master Boot Record (MBR) with arbitrary data so as to render the infected machine inoperable.

The malware, developed by the eponymous hacking crew also tracked as Magic Hound, Timberworm, COBALT GIPSY, was [first documented](#) by Broadcom-owned Symantec in August 2012. At least two updated versions of Shamoon have since emerged, Shamoon 2 in 2016 and Shamoon 3 in 2018.

In July 2021, the U.S. government [attributed](#) Shamoon as the handiwork of [Iranian state-sponsored actors](#), linking it to cyber offensives targeting industrial control systems.

On the other hand, attack activity involving the [Kwampirs backdoor](#) has been connected to a threat group known as Orangeworm, with Symantec disclosing an intrusion campaign aimed at entities in the healthcare sector in the U.S., Europe, and Asia.

"First identified in January 2015, Orangeworm has also conducted targeted attacks against organizations in related industries as part of a larger supply-chain attack in order to reach their intended victims," Symantec [said](#) in an analysis in April 2018.

Cylera Labs' uncovering of the connection stems from malware artifacts and previously unnoticed components, one of which is said to be an intermediary "stepping stone" version. It's a Shamoon dropper but sans the wiper feature, while simultaneously reusing the same loader code as Kwampirs.

What's more, code-level similarities have been uncovered between Kwampirs and subsequent versions of Shamoon. This includes the functionality to retrieve system metadata, fetch MAC address, and the victim's keyboard layout information as well as the use of the same [InternetOpenW](#) Windows API to craft HTTP requests to the command-and-control (C2) server.

Also put to use is a common template system to create the reporter module that houses capabilities to upload host information and download additional payloads to execute from their C2 servers, a feature that was missing in the first version of Shamoon.

In connecting the disparate dots, the investigation has led to the assessment that Kwampirs is likely based on Shamoon 1 and that Shamoon 2 inherited some of its code from Kwampirs, implying that the operators of both the malware are different sub-groups of a larger umbrella groups or that it's the work of a single actor.

Such a claim isn't without precedence. Just last week, Cisco Talos [detailed](#) the TTPs of another Iranian actor called MuddyWater, noting that the nation-state actor is a "conglomerate" of multiple teams operating independently rather than a single threat actor group.

"These conclusions, if indeed correct, would recast Kwampirs as a large-scale, multi-year attack on global healthcare supply chains conducted by a foreign state actor," the researchers concluded.

"The data gathered and systems accessed in these campaigns have a wide range of potential usage, including theft of intellectual property, gathering of medical records of targets like dissidents or military leaders, or reconnaissance to aid in the planning of future destructive attacks."

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HEADLINE	03/11 Ukraine leaks Russia IP as act of war
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/breach/in-a-first-ukraine-leaks-russian-intellectual-property-as-act-of-war">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/breach/in-a-first-ukraine-leaks-russian-intellectual-property-as-act-of-war</a>
GIST	The Main Intelligence Department of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (GURMO) hacked and leaked documents it claimed it stole from the Russian Beloyarsk Nuclear Power Station this week. The act is

believed to be the first time a hack-and-leak operation weaponized the leak of intellectual property to harm a nation.

GURMO has leaked a broad set of documents to writer Jeffery Carr, author of the book "Inside Cyber Warfare" and creator of the Suits and Spooks conference, to disseminate through his new [Substack newsletter](#). Later in the week, Carr sent out a second article of documents, this time of the Russian space program.

Beloyarsk's trade secrets may be valuable. It is home to the only two fast-breed nuclear reactors in commercial operation, the BN-600 and BN-800. The Beloyarsk technology is so fuel-efficient that it creates no nuclear waste, with countries such as [Japan and France](#) investing considerably to replicate it.

"It's taking a multi-billion dollar project that Russia has been building and made it open-source," said Eric Byres, chief technology officer at the industrial control systems cyberdefense firm aDolus Technology.

Beloyarsk is run by the Rosenergoatom, the Russian state nuclear utility. Damaging their ability to do business is both an economic strike and an embarrassment for the broader nation.

While this is likely the first such use of intellectual property to damage a nation, especially during a combat situation, hack-and-leak operations are not an entirely new tool for nation-states. Leaks are often used as a sub-war way to needle adversaries, like when North Korea leaked documents from Sony Entertainment in its retaliation for the Kim Jung-un assassination comedy "The Interview," and Russia leaking emails from high-ranking Democrats in the run-up to the 2016 election.

Carr told SC Media that GURMO wanted, in part, to demonstrate its capabilities.

"They want Putin to know that all of your resources are not keeping us out. And while we have not done anything to cause harm, it's within our ability to do that," Carr said.

"They are laughing at how easy it was for them. They have not hit anything that would stop them from achieving their objectives," he added.

After the 2016 election and various hack-and-leak ventures that followed it, [many newsrooms reconsidered](#) how they approached documents leaked by governments for geopolitical gain. Carr, who said he has vetted documents with experts to establish authenticity, said he believes he is being ethical, due to the circumstances of the war, particularly [the documented targeting of civilians](#).

"If the world were [at] peace, I don't know that I would ... feel the same way. In fact, I'm sure that I would not feel the same way," he said.

Carr said he is readying more document leaks for his newsletter.

The release of the Beloyarsk documents dent Russia in a variety of ways. Immediately it tells Russia that intelligence has access to various pieces of infrastructure. It embarrasses a country that likes to boast about its scientific might. The leak of intellectual property — either from Beloyarsk or the threat of future leaks — may damage potential future sales for the facility.

Any economic damage to sales might not be felt immediately.

"It won't make any difference today, but and I'm sure Mitsubishi is watching this with enthusiasm so that they can start offering fast-breeder reactors to their Middle Eastern clients," said Byres.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion, Ukraine has set up a [volunteer team of hackers](#) to conduct offensive operations. Yet the leaks to Carr were done in a government ministry's name.

	<p>That is notable in a world where countries often use proxies and shell personas to hide involvement in offensive hacking. Russia has previously used ransomware operators, Anonymous and a Romanian hacktivist persona in high-profile operations the U.S. attributed to Moscow.</p> <p>"We see other actors in the world doing that, and saying, 'I don't want a part of that, let's pass it off.' And I think strategically, strategically, it's a big signal to me that Ukraine, it's a ministry of defense [saying] that, 'No, this is ours,'" said Danielle Jablanski, OT cybersecurity strategist at Nozomi Networks. "That's really interesting for the future of what we're seeing in terms of the crowdsourcing and fluidity of the [Ukrainian volunteer hacker group, the] IT Army. They could have given the IT Army that task, but instead they took a direct role in it."</p> <p>Carr told SC that the hackers involved with the attack "have been doing this a long time," in part because their experience wasn't entirely governmental. "That part of the world, if you understand how to hack into a system, you've probably been working in a gray area," he said.</p> <p>Hack-and-leak IP operations may offer one other substantial benefit, noted Jablanski: It sends a strong signal to critical infrastructure without actually harming people by damaging critical infrastructure, and without the relative difficulty of bridging the IT/OT divide.</p> <p>"Stealing and publishing IP is just less risky than a cyber-physical effect," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Google: surge in Chrome vulnerabilities</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/google-attempts-explain-surge-chrome-zero-day-exploitation">https://www.securityweek.com/google-attempts-explain-surge-chrome-zero-day-exploitation</a>
GIST	<p><b>The number of Chrome vulnerabilities exploited in malicious attacks has been increasing over the past years and Google believes several factors have contributed to this trend.</b></p> <p>The number of <a href="#">Chrome vulnerabilities exploited in the wild</a> reached 14 in 2021, up from eight in 2020 and two in 2019. Chrome is targeted far more often than Firefox, Safari and Internet Explorer, according to data from Google's Project Zero research unit, which <a href="#">tracks exploitation of zero-days</a>.</p> <p>One reason for the increasing number of zero-day attacks targeting Chrome is related to transparency — browser security teams and research groups are increasingly informing the public about in-the-wild exploitation of vulnerabilities. For example, Project Zero's exploit tracker does not show any Chrome vulnerabilities being leveraged by hackers before 2019, but the internet giant admits that it "doesn't mean exploitation didn't happen."</p> <p>Another reason for Chrome being increasingly targeted is related to the deprecation of Flash, as well as the web browser's popularity. Specifically, threat actors often exploited Adobe Flash vulnerabilities in web attacks before the software was killed off, and now they are focusing more on the browser itself. In addition, since the Chromium rendering engine is now also used by Microsoft for its Edge browser, finding a Chromium vulnerability allows attackers to target more systems.</p> <p>Google has also attributed the rise in the number of exploited Chrome vulnerabilities to the need to chain multiple bugs for a single exploit. Seven years ago, a single vulnerability could be very valuable to attackers, but the security improvements in modern browsers have resulted in a single flaw almost never being enough for an attacker to achieve their goal.</p> <p>In addition, the company has blamed this trend on the increasing complexity of the browser, which now includes many of the functions of an operating system. This complexity, while beneficial in terms of functionality, also means more bugs.</p> <p>"Ultimately, we believe data is an important part of the story, but the absolute number of exploited bugs isn't a sufficient measure of security risk," Google <a href="#">argued</a>. "Since some security bugs are inevitable, how</p>

	<p>a software vendor architects their software (so that the impact of any single bug is limited) and responds to critical security bugs is often much more important than the specifics of any single bug.”</p> <p>The company says it has been taking steps to prevent Chrome from being abused by malicious actors. These steps include faster patching of vulnerabilities and mechanisms designed to make exploitation of entire classes of vulnerabilities more difficult.</p> <p>Google said recently that it paid out <a href="#">nearly \$9 million in bug bounties last year</a>, including roughly \$3.1 million for Chrome vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Only one Chrome vulnerability appears to have been <a href="#">exploited in the wild</a> until now in 2022.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Aberebot banking Trojan returns as Escobar</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/android-malware-escobar-steals-your-google-authenticator-mfa-codes/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/android-malware-escobar-steals-your-google-authenticator-mfa-codes/</a>
GIST	<p>The Aberebot Android banking trojan has returned under the name 'Escobar' with new features, including stealing Google Authenticator multi-factor authentication codes.</p> <p>The new features in the latest Aberebot version also include taking control of the infected Android devices using VNC, recording audio, and taking photos, while also expanding the set of targeted apps for credential theft.</p> <p>The main goal of the trojan is to steal enough information to allow the threat actors to take over victims' bank accounts, siphon available balances, and perform unauthorized transactions.</p> <p><b>Rebranded as Escobar</b></p> <p>Using <a href="#">KELA</a>'s cyber-intelligence DARKBEAST platform, BleepingComputer found a forum post on a Russian-speaking hacking forum from February 2022 where the Aberebot developer promotes their new version under the name 'Escobar Bot Android Banking Trojan.'</p> <p>The malware author is renting the beta version of the malware for \$3,000 per month to a maximum of five customers, with threat actors having the ability to test the bot for free for three days.</p> <p>The threat actor plans on raising the malware's price to \$5,000 after development is finished.</p> <p>MalwareHunterTeam first spotted the suspicious APK on March 3, 2022, masqueraded as a McAfee app, and warned about its stealthiness against the vast majority of anti-virus engines.</p> <p>This was picked up by <a href="#">researchers at Cyble</a>, who performed an analysis of the new 'Escobar' variant of the Aberebot trojan.</p> <p>According to the same analysts, Aberebot first appeared in the wild in <a href="#">the summer of 2021</a>, so the appearance of a new version indicates active development.</p> <p><b>Old and new capabilities</b></p> <p>Like <a href="#">most banking trojans</a>, Escobar displays overlay login forms to hijack user interactions with e-banking apps and websites and steal credentials from victims.</p> <p>The malware also packs several other features that make it potent against any Android version, even if the overlay injections are blocked in some manner.</p> <p>The authors have expanded the set of targeted banks and financial institutions to a whopping 190 entities from 18 countries in the latest version.</p>

	<p>The malware requests 25 permissions, of which 15 are abused for malicious purposes. Examples include accessibility, audio record, read SMS, read/ write storage, get account list, disabling the keylock, making calls, and accessing precise device location.</p> <p>Everything that the malware collects is uploaded to the C2 server, including SMS call logs, key logs, notifications, and Google Authenticator codes.</p> <p><b>Should we be concerned?</b></p> <p>It is still early to tell how popular the new Escobar malware will become in the cybercrime community, especially at a relatively high price. Nevertheless, it's now powerful enough to entice a wider audience.</p> <p>Also, its operational model, which involves random actors that can rent it, means its distribution channels and methods may vary greatly.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Ubisoft confirms 'cyber security incident'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ubisoft-confirms-cyber-security-incident-resets-staff-passwords/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ubisoft-confirms-cyber-security-incident-resets-staff-passwords/</a>
GIST	<p>Video game developer Ubisoft has confirmed that it suffered a 'cyber security incident' that caused disruption to its games, systems, and services.</p> <p>The announcement comes after multiple Ubisoft users had reported issues last week accessing their Ubisoft service.</p> <p>Data extortion group LAPSUS\$, who has claimed responsibility for hacking Samsung, NVIDIA, and Mercado Libre thus far, appears to be behind this incident.</p> <p><b>Ubisoft initiates 'company-wide password reset'</b></p> <p>Video game production giant Ubisoft states it experienced a cyber security incident sometime last week.</p> <p>"Last week, Ubisoft experienced a cyber security incident that caused temporary disruption to some of our games, systems, and services," <a href="#">says</a> the company in a succinct news release.</p> <p>"Our IT teams are working with leading external experts to investigate the issue. As a precautionary measure we initiated a company-wide password reset."</p> <p>Headquartered in Montreuil with its studios around the world, the game maker has repeatedly produced hit titles including Assassin's Creed, Far Cry, For Honor, Just Dance, Prince of Persia, Rabbids, Rayman, Tom Clancy's, and Watch Dogs.</p> <p>On March 4th, users on Twitter and DOWNDetector did report issues accessing some of the Ubisoft services, that appear to be linked to this incident:</p> <p>At this time, there is no evidence indicating any personal information of players was exposed during the incident.</p> <p>The company confirms that all Ubisoft games and services are now functioning normally.</p> <p><b>LAPSUS\$ group reacts to the disclosure</b></p> <p>News of Ubisoft confirming the cyber security incident was <a href="#">first reported</a> by The Verge.</p> <p>Moments later, admins of what is believed to be <a href="#">Lapsus\$</a>' Telegram group reacted to The Verge's <a href="#">initial report</a> with a smirk emoji, insinuating that Lapsus\$ is behind the hack...</p> <p>Lapsus\$ has previously leaked gigabytes of proprietary data purportedly stolen from leading companies as <a href="#">Samsung</a>, <a href="#">NVIDIA</a>, and <a href="#">Mercado Libre</a> confirmed this month they had suffered a breach.</p>

Data extortion groups like Lapsus\$ breach victims but as opposed to encrypting confidential files like a ransomware operator would, these actors steal and hold on to victims' proprietary data, and publish it should their extortion demands not be met.

In 2020, Egregor ransomware had hit game developer Crytek and [leaked what they claim were files stolen from Ubisoft's network](#). Although, at the time, Ubisoft did not confirm the authenticity of the claim.

In this case, however, it does not seem that Lapsus\$ or any other threat actor was able to obtain Ubisoft's proprietary data, and the investigation continues.

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HEADLINE	03/11 Anonymous hacks Russia federal agency
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hackread.com/anonymous-hacks-roskomnadzor-russia-agency/?web_view=true">https://www.hackread.com/anonymous-hacks-roskomnadzor-russia-agency/?web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>The international hacktivists collective <a href="#">Anonymous</a> has struck again and this time the group is claiming to have hacked Roskomnadzor (aka Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media), a major Russian federal agency. The group also claims to have stolen over 360,000 files.</p> <p>We often read about Russia banning VPNs, Telegram or email services, etc. But did you know which agency actually bans these services? For your information, it is <a href="#">Roskomnadzor</a>, a major federal executive agency responsible for controlling, assessing, and censoring Russian media.</p> <p><b>Details of the Hack</b></p> <p>As seen by Hackread.com, the total size of the leaked database is around 820 GB, and a majority of the files in the database belong to Roskomnadzor's data concerning the Republic of Bashkortostan, one of Russia's largest provinces.</p> <p>The entire dataset is now available on the official website of Distributed Denial of Secrets (aka <a href="#">DDoSecrets</a>), a non-profit whistleblower organization. It is however worth noting that originally an Anonymous affiliate shared Roskomnadzor's data with DDoSecrets and the organization itself it not behind the hack.</p> <p>Furthermore, the <a href="#">initial announcement</a> of the data leak came from journalist and co-founder of DDoSecrets Emma Best on March 10th, 2022. On the other hand, @YourAnonNews, one of the prominent representatives of Anonymous collective, also <a href="#">tweeted</a> about hack.</p> <p><b>Why Roskomnadzor?</b></p> <p>Anonymous has publically sided with Ukraine over the ongoing conflict with Russia. The Russian government has blocked all key sources of information, particularly news and media outlets, and Roskomnadzor was tasked to block Facebook, Twitter, and other online platforms.</p> <p>While <a href="#">Twitter launched its Tor onion service</a>, authorities in Russia have also amended the Criminal Code to arrest anyone who posts information that contradicts the government's stance. Nevertheless, since Roskomnadzor is a major government agency responsible for implementing government orders Anonymous believes Russian public must have access to information about what is going on within Roskomnadzor.</p> <p><b>Anonymous Cyberwar Against Russia</b></p> <p>Anonymous waged a cyberwar against Russia on exactly the same day its troops invaded Ukraine.</p> <p>Anonymous earlier blocked Russian Defense Ministry's website and published its employees' data online.</p>



On March 7th, the group [hacked Russian state TV channels](#) and [Netflix-like video streaming services](#) and aired pro-Ukrainian messages with footage of the Russian military's shelling on Ukrainian civilians and residential areas.

Moreover, as Hackread.com [reported yesterday](#), Anonymous also targeted and hacked misconfigured/exposed Cloud databases of Russian organizations. The shocking aspect of the attack was the fact that Anonymous and its affiliate hackers hacked 90% of Russian Cloud databases and left anti-war and pro Ukrainian messages.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Hacked companies new report requirements</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/hacked-us-companies-face-new-reporting-requirements?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.securityweek.com/hacked-us-companies-face-new-reporting-requirements?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p><b>Companies critical to U.S. national interests will now have to report when they're hacked or they pay ransomware, according to new rules approved by Congress.</b></p> <p>The rules are part of a broader effort by the Biden administration and Congress to shore up the nation's cyberdefenses after a series of high-profile digital espionage campaigns and disruptive ransomware attacks. The reporting will give the federal government much greater visibility into hacking efforts that target private companies, which often have skipped going to the FBI or other agencies for help.</p> <p>"It's clear we must take bold action to improve our online defenses," Sen. Gary Peters, a Michigan Democrat who leads the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee and wrote the legislation, said in a statement on Friday.</p> <p>The <a href="#">reporting requirement legislation</a> was approved by the House and the Senate on Thursday and is expected to be signed into law by President Joe Biden soon. It requires any entity that's considered part of the nation's critical infrastructure, which includes the finance, transportation and energy sectors, to report any "substantial cyber incident" to the government within three days and any ransomware payment made within 24 hours.</p> <p>Ransomware attacks, in which criminals hack targets and hold their data hostage through encryption until ransoms have been paid, have flourished in recent years. Attacks last year on the world's largest meat-packing company and the biggest U.S. fuel pipeline — which led to days of gas station shortages on the East Coast — have underscored how gangs of extortionist hackers can disrupt the economy and put lives and livelihoods at risk.</p> <p>State hackers from Russia and China have had continued success hacking into and spying on U.S. targets, including critical infrastructure targets. The most notable was Russia's <a href="#">SolarWinds</a> cyberespionage campaign, which was discovered at the end of 2020.</p> <p>Experts and government officials worry that <a href="#">Russia's war in Ukraine has increased the threat of cyberattacks</a> against U.S. targets, by either state or proxy actors. Many ransomware operators live and work in Russia.</p> <p>"As our nation rightly supports Ukraine during Russia's illegal unjustifiable assault, I am concerned the threat of Russian cyber and ransomware attacks against U.S. critical infrastructure will increase," said Sen. Rob Portman, a Republican from Ohio.</p> <p>The legislation designates the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency as the lead agency to receive notices of hacks and ransomware payments. That caused concern at the FBI, which had openly campaigned for tweaks to the bill in an unusually public disagreement over legislation endorsed overall by the White House.</p> <p>"We want one call to be a call to us all," FBI Director Christopher Wray said last week at a cyber event at the University of Kansas. "What's needed is not a whole bunch of different reporting but real-time access</p>

by all the people who need to have it to the same report. So that's what we're talking about — not multiple reporting chains but multiple access, multiple contemporaneous action, to the information.”

The FBI also has expressed concern that liability protections that would cover companies that report a breach to CISA would not extend to reporting a breach to the FBI, an issue the bureau believes could unnecessarily complicate law enforcement efforts to respond to hacks and to aid victims.

Lawmakers who helped write the bill have pushed back against the FBI, saying the bureau's concerns about being notified of hacks and liability concerns were adequately addressed in the final version of it. The new rules also empower CISA to subpoena companies that fail to report hacks or ransomware payments, and those that fail to comply with a subpoena could be referred to the Justice Department for investigation.

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HEADLINE	03/11 Bridgestone Americas confirms cyberattack
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/bridgestone-americas-confirms-ransomware-attack-lockbit-leaks-data/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/bridgestone-americas-confirms-ransomware-attack-lockbit-leaks-data/</a>
GIST	<p>A cyberattack on Bridgestone Americas, one of the largest manufacturers of tires in the world, has been claimed by the LockBit ransomware gang.</p> <p>The threat actor announced that they will leak all data stolen from the company and launched a countdown timer, which is currently at less than three hours.</p> <p><b>Timer activated</b></p> <p>Bridgestone has tens of production units across the world and over 130,000 employees (regular and contractual), as per the company's data at the end of 2020.</p> <p>On February 27, Bridgestone started to investigate “a potential information security incident” detected in the morning hours of the same day.</p> <p>"Out of an abundance of caution, we disconnected many of our manufacturing and retreading facilities in Latin America and North America from our network to contain and prevent any potential impact,” <a href="#">Bridgestone said</a> in a statement to media.</p> <p>No details about the incident emerged until today when the LockBit ransomware gang claimed the attack by adding Bridgestone Americas to the list of their victims.</p> <p>LockBit is one of the most active ransomware gangs today, targeting large corporations, sometimes asking for ransoms of tens of millions of U.S. dollars, as was the case with <a href="#">Accenture</a>.</p> <p>It is unclear what data LockBit stole from Bridgestone or how detrimental leaking it would be to the company. At the time of writing, the countdown from the actor for publishing the files expires in about three hours and a half.</p> <p>In a report last month, industrial cybersecurity company Dragos notes that LockBit was the most active <a href="#">ransomware actor targeting the industrial sector</a> last year, with 103 attacks, followed by the Conti gang with 63.</p> <p>The FBI in early February shared technical details and defense tips for LockBit ransomware attacks, noting that a bug in the malware allows showing a hidden debug window to view in real-time the state of data destruction.</p> <p>BleepingComputer has reached out to Bridgestone Americas for a statement on the recent incident but did not hear back by publishing time.</p>

	<b>Update [March 11, 16:36 EST]:</b> Bridgestone Americas replied to BleepingComputer's request for comments saying that it is working with <i>Accenture Security</i> "to investigate and understand the full scope and nature of the incident" and that they are analyzing to determine what data was stolen.
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Rostec shuts down website after attack</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russian-defense-firm-rostec-shuts-down-website-after-ddos-attack/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russian-defense-firm-rostec-shuts-down-website-after-ddos-attack/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Rostec, a Russian state-owned aerospace and defense conglomerate, said its website was taken down today following what it described as a "cyberattack."</p> <p>The state defense company says its website has been under constant siege since late February when Russia invaded its neighbor Ukraine without provocation.</p> <p>Rostec claims the website was brought back online quickly and attributed the attack to Ukrainian "radicals."</p> <p>"We had to briefly close the website. The attack has been repelled, and now the website is functioning again and all information about the corporation is available in full," Rostec told Interfax.</p> <p>"The latest attack began at 11:30 a.m. today. Its masterminds are radicals from Ukraine."</p> <p>The Ukrainians mentioned by Rostec as having coordinated the attack are part of the country's newly formed IT Army, a large group of volunteers that have been targeting Russian state networks and organizations since Russia's invasion.</p> <p>Earlier today, multiple Rostec's domains and resources were assigned as targets for distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks in the IT Army of Ukraine Telegram channel.</p> <p><b>Ukraine's IT Army</b></p> <p>Today's takedown of the Rostec website comes after the Russian government shared a list of over 17,000 IP addresses it said were <a href="#">used in DDoS attacks targeting Russian networks</a>.</p> <p>The FSB's National Coordination Center for Computer Incidents (NKTsKI) also warned Russian orgs to defend their information security and shared guidance against DDoS attacks.</p> <p>This warning followed an announcement from Ukrainian Vice Prime Minister Mykhailo Fedorov that <a href="#">an "IT army"</a> made out of volunteers worldwide was created to support Ukraine's "fight on the cyber front."</p> <p>The creation of the Ukrainian IT Army was prompted by a "massive wave of hybrid warfare. It was revealed after the Defense Ministry of Ukraine started "conscripting" <a href="#">members of Ukraine's underground hacker community</a> to launch cyberattacks against Russian networks.</p> <p>The Ukrainian cyber police force later announced that key Russian websites and state online portals <a href="#">had been taken offline following IT Army's attacks</a>.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the Russian Digital Development Ministry said that the sites of multiple federal agencies, including the Energy Ministry and the Federal State Statistics Service, <a href="#">were hacked in a supply chain attack</a> and defaced.</p> <p>It also told Interfax earlier this week that "there are nonstop cyberattacks on Russian sites from abroad" and denied reports that Russia is planning to disconnect from the world wide web.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Exposed: Putin's leaky internet controls</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/war-censorship-exposes-putins-leaky-internet-controls-83429741">https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/war-censorship-exposes-putins-leaky-internet-controls-83429741</a>
GIST	<p>BOSTON -- Long before waging war on Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin was working to make Russia's internet a powerful tool of surveillance and social control akin to China's so-called Great Firewall.</p> <p>So when Western tech companies began cutting ties with Russia following its invasion, Russian investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov was alarmed. He'd spent years exposing Russian censorship and feared that well-intentioned efforts to aid Ukraine would instead help Putin isolate Russians from the free flow of information, aiding the Kremlin's propaganda war.</p> <p>"Look, guys the only space the Russians have to talk about Ukraine. and what is going on in Russia. is Facebook," Soldatov, now exiled in London. wrote on Facebook in the war's first week. "You cannot just, like, kill our access."</p> <p>Facebook didn't, although the Kremlin soon picked up that baton, throttling both Facebook and Twitter so badly they are effectively unreachable on the Russian internet. Putin has also blocked access to both Western media and independent news sites in the country, and a new law criminalizes spreading information that contradicts the government's line. On Friday, the Kremlin said it would also restrict access to Instagram. By early Monday, the network monitor NetBlocks reported the social network throttled across multiple Russian internet providers.</p> <p>Yet the Kremlin's latest censorship efforts have revealed serious shortcomings in the government's bigger plans to straightjacket the internet. Any Russian with a modicum of tech smarts can circumvent government efforts to starve Russians of fact.</p> <p>For instance, the government has so far had only limited success blocking the use of software known as virtual private networks, or VPNs, that allows users to evade content restrictions. The same goes for Putin's attempts to restrict the use of other censorship-evading software.</p> <p>That puts providers of internet bandwidth and associated services sympathetic to Ukraine's plight in a tough spot. On one side, they face public pressure to punish the Russian state and economic reasons to limit services at a time when bills might well go unpaid. On the other, they're wary of helping stifle a free flow of information that can counter Kremlin disinformation — for instance, the state's claim that Russia's military is heroically "liberating" Ukraine from fascists.</p> <p>Amazon Web Services, a major provider of cloud computing services, continues to operate in Russia, although it says it's not taking on any new customers. Both Cloudflare, which helps shield websites from denial-of-service attacks and malware, and Akamai, which boosts site performance by putting internet content closer to its audience, also continue to serve their Russian customers, with exceptions including cutting off state-owned companies and firms under sanctions.</p> <p>Microsoft, by contrast, hasn't said whether it will halt its cloud services in the country, although it has suspended all new sales of products and services.</p> <p>U.S.-based Cogent, which provides a major "backbone" for internet traffic, has cut direct connections inside Russia but left open the pipes through subsidiaries of Russian network providers at exchanges physically outside the country. Another major U.S. backbone provider, Lumen, has done the same.</p> <p>"We have no desire to cut off Russian individuals and think that an open internet is critical to the world," Cogent CEO Dave Schaeffer said in an interview. Direct connections to servers inside Russia, he said, could potentially "be used for offensive cyber efforts by the Russian government."</p> <p>Schaeffer said the decision didn't reflect "financial considerations," although he acknowledged that the ruble's sharp drop, which makes imported goods and services more expensive in Russia, could make it difficult to collect customer payments. Meanwhile, he said, Cogent is providing Ukrainian customers free service during the conflict.</p>

Schaeffer said these moves might impair internet video in Russia but will leave plenty of bandwidth for smaller files.

Other major backbone providers in Europe and Asia also continue to serve Russia, a net importer of bandwidth, said Doug Madory, director of internet analysis for the network management firm Kentik. He has noted no appreciable drop in connectivity from outside providers.

Cloudflare continues to operate four data centers in Russia even though Russian authorities ordered government websites to drop foreign-owned hosting providers as of Friday. In a March 7 blog post the company said it had determined “Russia needs more Internet access, not less.”

Under a 2019 “sovereign internet” law, Russia is supposed to be able to operate its internet independent of the rest of the world. In practice, that has brought Russia closer to the kind of intensive internet monitoring and control practiced by China and Iran.

Its telecommunications oversight agency, Rozkomnadzor, successfully tested the system at scale a year ago when it throttled access to Twitter. It uses hundreds of so-called middleboxes — router-like devices run and remotely controlled by bureaucrats that can block individual websites and services — installed by law at all internet providers inside Russia.

But the system, which also lets the FSB security service spy on Russian citizens, is a relative sieve compared to China’s Great Firewall. Andrew Sullivan, president of the nonprofit Internet Society, said there’s no evidence it has the ability to successfully disconnect Russia from the wider internet.

“Walling off a country’s internet is complicated, culturally, economically and technologically. And it becomes far more complicated with a country like Russia, whose internet, unlike China’s, was not originally built out with government control in mind,” he said.

“When it comes to censorship, the only ones who can really do it are the Chinese,” said Serge Droz, a senior security engineer at Swiss-based Proton Technologies, which offers software for creating VPNs, a principal tool for circumventing state censorship.

ProtonVPN, which Droz says has been inventive in finding ways to circumvent Russian blocking, reports clocking ten times as many daily signups than before the war. VPN services tracked by researchers at Top10VPN.com found Facebook and Twitter downloads surging eight times higher than average. Its research found the Kremlin to have blocked more than 270 news and financial sites since the invasion, including BBC News and Voice of America’s Russian-language services.

Russia’s elites are believed to be big VPN users. No one expects them to disconnect.

Russian authorities are also having some success blocking the privacy-protecting Tor browser, which like VPNs lets users visit content at special “.onion” sites on the so-called dark web, researchers say. Twitter just created a Tor site; other outlets such as The New York Times also have them.

The Kremlin has not, however, blocked the popular Telegram messaging app. It’s an important conduit for Ukrainian government ministries and also for Meduza, the Latvia-based independent Russian-language news organization whose website is blocked in Russia. Meduza has 1 million followers on Telegram.

One reason may be that Telegram is also a vital conduit for Kremlin propagandists, analysts say.

Additionally, Telegram does not feature default end-to-end encryption, which renders messages unreadable by the company and outsiders, as the popular U.S.-based messaging apps Signal and WhatsApp do. WhatsApp is owned by Facebook’s parent, Meta. Telegram does offer users fully encrypted “private chats,” although users have to make sure to activate them.

	<p>After the invasion, Signal founder Moxie Marlinspike tweeted a reminder that sensitive communication on insecure apps can literally be a matter of life and death in war. A Signal spokesman would not share user numbers, but WhatsApp has an estimated 63 million users in Russia.</p> <p>Being able to access outside websites and apps vital to staying informed depend, however, on foreign-based VPN services that Russians say they are having trouble paying for since Visa and Mastercard cut off their country.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Meth underground hides in plain sight</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/internet-meth-underground-hidden-in-plain-sight/index.html">https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/internet-meth-underground-hidden-in-plain-sight/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>In December, Paul went home for the holidays. Like many people, he hadn't seen his family for almost a year.</p> <p>But instead of spending time with his loved ones, he said he stayed in his room and injected methamphetamine. While his family was downstairs, Paul said he pretended to be sick while he relapsed in a multiday meth binge.</p> <p>Though he was alone in his room, he was using drugs with other people. As he was injecting methamphetamine, he connected with hundreds of other individuals doing the same thing over Zoom.</p> <p>"There is no meth without Zoom, and there is no Zoom without meth," Paul, whom NBC News is identifying only by his first name to protect him from professional harm, said in an interview. "That is where I found a forum, like a tribe, where I could be my authentic self with no fear of judgment."</p> <p>Paul, who said he's been addicted to meth for about eight years, is part of a sprawling online community of meth users, hidden in plain sight on nearly every major social media platform and digital communication tool, from Facebook to Zoom to Reddit to Twitter.</p> <p>As nearly all social media platforms and tech companies have trended toward increased platform moderation amid heightened scrutiny from watchdogs, meth users have attracted little attention as they build online communities of tens of thousands of people. With a mixed bag of policies pertaining to drug content that varies by platform, users have found numerous venues where they can post photos and videos of themselves using methamphetamine, sell drugs and encourage other people to use meth.</p> <p>The growth of these communities has coincided with a meth boom in the U.S. and other parts of the world. According to the U.S. National Institutes of Health, frequent meth use increased by 66 percent between 2015 and 2019. During that same time period, noncocaine stimulant overdoses nearly tripled, in part due to meth use. While the internet has long been home to groups of drug users and sellers, prosecutors and law enforcement are now increasingly targeting these groups. Despite that fact, meth-focused online behavior is openly thriving.</p> <p>In interviews with NBC News, 10 current and former meth users described how modern-day social media platforms and communication tools like Zoom have fundamentally changed the experience of people using — and trying to get sober from — methamphetamine.</p> <p>Meth, unlike opiates and other types of drugs, can keep users awake for days at a time, and often leaves them craving a level of social and sexual connectivity not found with many other drugs. Not only does technology make connecting with other users and sellers easier than ever before, it also provides numerous easy and sometimes hard-to-ignore triggers for craving and relapse.</p> <p>All but one person asked to withhold their last names or to go by their first initials to publicly discuss their drug use without fear of personal and professional harm.</p> <p>A review of online communities conducted by NBC News found Zoom rooms with hundreds of people congregating to use meth, Reddit groups where people frequently post photos and videos of themselves</p>



using meth and seek meth connections, Facebook groups where people sell meth, and Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube and Instagram profiles devoted to meth content. On Reddit, similar communities exist among heroin and cocaine users, but searches for Zoom communities devoted to other drugs didn't return any results.

The meth communities pose challenging questions for tech companies, which must determine how to moderate the groups, if at all. While experts and current and former meth users agreed that technology and the internet were worsening aspects of an already blazing global meth addiction problem, some sources said that online groups gave them a source of connection during their lowest points of isolation.

### **The endless party on Zoom**

At 1 p.m. on a Wednesday in February, a DJ in front of pink flashing lights played a trance song that included audio snippets from Netflix's *Squid Game* for a crowd of 90 people. The performance wasn't at a warehouse rave. It was in a Zoom room organized around meth use.

While hardcore pornography streamed, members of the audience with lightly coded usernames referencing "Meff," "clouds" and "slamming" showed themselves injecting (slamming) and smoking (clouds) meth, having sex, masturbating, passed out and eating lunch. For meth users on Zoom, it was just another day.

While Zoom became a household name during the Covid-19 pandemic, the platform was familiar to many meth users for years before it went mainstream.

According to Paul and other current and former meth users, Zoom has been used since at least 2018 to host large-scale, online meth parties, oftentimes for LGBTQ men — a community ravaged by methamphetamine use — but also among mixed-gender groups.

Paul said he first started to see Zoom used among meth users at in-person parties where people would get together to use drugs and have sex, called "party and play," in the queer community. Initially, the technology was used to connect in-person parties from around the world, with links easily searchable in search engines and shared on the now defunct social platform Google+.

Over time, and boosted by the pandemic, according to Paul and other people who have participated in the Zoom meth scene, the online meth community became more organized, distributed and oriented around individual users.

Today, it's easy to find Zoom links to rooms on social media sites like Reddit, Twitter, the group chat platform Discord, MeWe — an alternative social media platform with little moderation — and via search engines like Google and Bing. Inside the rooms, many of which go around the clock for weeks at a time and use paid accounts, it's common for at least 50 to 150 people to be on video using meth at the same time.

For Paul, the Zoom rooms are a way "of staying connected without having to face the reality of the fact that it's Sunday at 4 a.m."

He also said the rooms were a space where no one judges anyone else for how or when they use meth.

"There's always someone that will slam with you," Paul said. "In a room, people come and go, faces come and go, but there is always someone that's going to condone that, give you the thumbs up — their approval — that what you're about to do is cool."

In a statement provided to NBC News, a Zoom spokesperson said, "This type of activity is not welcome on Zoom and we take action whenever we become aware of it." The spokesperson said that the company would "only take action if we receive reports about possible violations of our Terms of Service or Community Standards." The spokesperson added that the company did "not have the means to insert our employees or others into meetings without them being visible as participants." Many of the rooms viewed by NBC News remain open and active.

Google spokesperson Ned Adriance highlighted the company's efforts to include addiction helpline numbers at the top of search results related to addiction. But only a small number of NBC News' searches triggered this feature.

A MeWe spokesperson emphasized that "Illegal activity of any kind is strictly prohibited on MeWe."

A Discord spokesperson said, "Discord's policies prohibit users from promoting, encouraging or engaging in any illegal behavior. When we become aware of this kind of activity, we take immediate action, including banning users and shutting down servers."

Bing did not respond to a request for comment.

### **Isolation and extreme meth use**

Robert started using meth in 2004 by accident.

After meeting a man on Craigslist, he snorted a line of powder that he thought was cocaine. It turned out to be methamphetamine.

With little knowledge available about meth at the time and few resources available, Robert, who asked that NBC News conceal his last name to protect his privacy, became an "on and off" user, which he defines as five to six times per year.

Eventually, Robert found that his meth use was affecting his everyday life. He was arrested for possession after trying to wait out his high before driving home. He also said he's fallen because of dehydration during binges numerous times, once necessitating a trip to the emergency room and stitches to his head.

More frequently, Robert ended up turning to Zoom when he was high.

"It's safer and more convenient," he said. "At least you're not out in public."

Like Paul, Robert began to find a sense of community in the Zoom groups, and almost exclusively turned to them when he was high.

But Zoom meth use comes with its own unique dangers, Robert and other people say.

Zoom users often encourage people to use more drugs than they might in in-person groups, Robert said, egging people on to smoke and inject more in the chat.

"I think there's a lot of potential for heightened risk," said David Fawcett, vice president of clinical programming at Seeking Integrity, an addiction treatment center that focuses on intersectional drug and sex addictions. "I think people can be certainly less compassionate and empathetic and be more cruel, and actually encourage people to maybe take a bigger dose than they might have."

Numerous Zoom meth room participants also mentioned the isolating effects of the groups.

"Because of its availability, I think it encouraged me to stay in more often, and to isolate and not look for partners, and it became very addicting just going on Zoom," Robert said. "It feels like such a waste of time. You're up all night, the sun comes up, the sun goes down, you miss entire days. In the end, you're just all alone."

Ignacio Labayen de Inza, the founder of the harm reduction group Controlling Chemsex, said that heightened levels of isolation could be dangerous for meth users.

"Suicidal thoughts are very common," he said. "The only interaction that you have with people is messy. It's chaotic. It's about fantasizing. And it's very unsatisfactory because you never get what you want."

## **Meth on Reddit, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook**

Meth use can be found on almost every major social media and digital communication platform, often with a simple keyword search.

And despite the rules of many tech services against the sale of drugs on their platforms, they are not in agreement on how to treat content depicting meth use.

In its terms of service, Zoom says it bans “obscene” and “illegal” content, despite the continued presence of long-term meth rooms on its platform. There was a period of time in 2018, however, when Zoom was attempting to shut down the rooms, going after the administrators of well-known, large-scale rooms, according to multiple people who participated in the Zoom meth rooms before 2018. But with time and the Zoom boom of the pandemic, the rooms have restarted and largely appear to go unchecked.

Reddit is home to a variety of meth-based communities, including r/meth, which has more than 76,000 members. It’s one of dozens of groups on the platform that openly host content that glorifies meth use, including links to Zoom chats and other platforms. In r/meth, users post photos and videos of themselves using meth, seek advice on topics like cleaning up spilled drugs, and post personal ads looking for other users.

Cody, who asked to be identified only by his first name, is a meth user who frequently posts on meth Reddit. He creates videos of himself smoking meth set to music, and distorted by filters and visual effects. He said posting on Reddit has allowed him to connect with other meth users online and in real life.

“I got a few Reddit followers here and there,” he said. “I’ve met three girls in real life that I know from Reddit. All were addicts in active addiction.”

In another meth-associated subreddit, which has more than 3,000 members, people sell explicit photos, videos, and video chat sessions that feature drug use. On another subreddit with more than 44,000 members, users openly advertise their ability to sell or provide meth, using coded words oftentimes associated with the drug.

Reddit’s content rules are more permissive than those of other major tech companies. As far as drugs go, Reddit explicitly bans only the buying and selling of drugs on the platform, according to a spokesperson.

“We have dedicated teams that enforce our policies across the platform,” the spokesperson said. The spokesperson added that some communities, like r/meth, were allowed to continue to exist on the platform with harm reduction in mind — providing a space for drug users to connect and be together virtually rather than alone.

In public and private groups on Facebook, members look for and advertise meth for sale.

In one group called Meth Lifestyle, which was created in December and had more than 2,400 members before it was deleted, a group administrator called Snow Plug posted pictures of methamphetamine, writing “HMU if u need,” using a common abbreviation for “hit me up.” Another administrator posted a link to a Telegram group with photos and videos of methamphetamine, encouraging users to purchase the drugs through Cash App, Venmo, Zelle or Apple Pay and promising speedy delivery.

In other existing Facebook groups that have thousands of members with names like “Now that’s method Up!” and “Da meth homies,” users post photos of meth, post videos of themselves smoking meth and look for and advertise meth for sale.

In response to questions from NBC News, a spokesperson for Meta, which owns Facebook, said: “We removed several groups and pages for violating our policies by sharing content that coordinates or promotes the use of illicit drugs. We’re working hard to keep this content off Facebook and Instagram by using technology, reports from our community and reviews by our teams to enforce these policies.”

Despite Meta's actions, groups and pages advertising meth sale and use were still easily found on Facebook via search.

On Twitter, users with thousands and tens of thousands of followers shared Zoom links to meth-focused rooms, post meth videos using hashtags like #CrystalMeth, and publish pornography that shows people injecting what appears to be methamphetamine. The videos can bring in hundreds of thousands of views. On meth-focused accounts, Twitter's algorithmic recommendation feature frequently surfaces other accounts devoted to the drug.

Twitter bans the sale or purchase of drugs on its platform. In response to NBC News' inquiry, Twitter suspended four accounts, saying: "We take the safety of our users seriously and in an effort to address the potential for real-world harm, prohibit the use of Twitter for any unlawful behavior or to further illegal activity." But accounts promoting the sale of meth and drug use are still easy to locate on the platform.

Despite explicitly banning "content that depicts abuse of or giving instructions on how to create hard drugs such as cocaine or opioids," YouTube continues to host homemade videos of people smoking and glorifying meth. A search of the popular meth slang "clouds" along with "meth" brought up dozens of videos of people abusing methamphetamine, some with more than 100,000 views.

YouTube spokesperson Elena Hernandez said: "Our community guidelines don't allow videos that show hard drug use. As a result we removed a number of the videos raised to us by NBC News and we're continuing to review additional content." But it took only a single search to find more homemade videos showing people smoking meth.

### **Digital triggers can hamper recovery**

Despite the abundance of meth material online, Richard said he's been off meth for more than three months and intends to stay off. But he acknowledges that the difficulties of addiction in the digital age have sometimes led him back to drugs.

"I'm constantly going through this, trying to quit," he said.

The mere availability of his triggers has led him to struggles with relapse, Richard said.

"If I'm stressing out on something, or if I'm really worried or have a lot of anxiety or depression or whatever, then I will go to those sites and sometimes they can be very triggering and they just suck me in," he said of Zoom rooms and hookup apps like Grindr. Grindr and similar hookup apps are frequently used by meth users to connect with one another locally, and sometimes to obtain drugs, according to the people interviewed for this story and NBC's previous reporting. A Grindr spokesperson said that "illegal drug-related activity will get a user banned, no question."

The urge to get on Zoom and use meth has been so strong for Richard that he said he's thrown out multiple webcams.

"I couldn't control myself," he said. I didn't want to do it anymore, So I finally threw out the camera."

Webcamming on Zoom is so tied to meth use for him, though, that he's rushed out to buy cameras before he begins a relapse. "When I knew I wanted to use I would race to go to the store and buy a camera first before I even used," he said.

Richard isn't alone in his struggle to maintain sobriety in a digital landscape.

Adam Jones, who was first introduced to crystal meth in 2019 and has cycled through phases of active addiction and recovery since, said social media has been a strong trigger for him.

“It makes you attach to not only smells, people, places and things but social media as well,” he said. “It can be a trigger.”

Jones, who said that during his active addiction it was common to see Zoom rooms open and streaming at in-person meth parties, said that now “little things can just pop up in everyday living and you just want to use.”

Jones said that social media has directly led him to relapse. Early in his recovery, he said that he remade his Facebook page and added only friends who were also in recovery. But that didn’t stop incoming messages on the platform from a former partner who he used meth with. “The floodgates opened,” he said.

J, a 33-year-old in recovery who used to run a popular meth-focused Tumblr page and asked to only be referred to by his first initial to maintain his privacy, told a similar story.

Despite abandoning his Tumblr account, part of a longstanding meth-devoted community on the platform that creates drug use content and advertises drugs for sale, J. still had to confront digital temptation.

After he became sober, he said Instagram accounts trying to sell drugs would message him without warning. J said he usually reports the pages, but isn’t always successful in getting them removed from the platform. Instagram has had a well-publicized battle with drug dealers who use the platform to advertise and sell their products. In December, the Tech Transparency Project released a report that documented how teens were recommended to follow drug-selling accounts on the platform.

The role technology plays in many people’s meth addiction is so pivotal, that many addiction experts recommend that people in recovery severely restrict their use of phones and the internet.

“Technology just creates so many on-ramps, to get back into trouble,” said Fawcett, the vice president of Seeking Integrity.

“A lot of guys who take this very seriously actually get flip phones so that they’re not able to surf the internet on their phones,” he said.

A spokesperson for Tumblr said “the sale, exchange, or promotion of illegal or regulated drugs and substances is not allowed on Tumblr.” Meth content is still easily searchable on the platform.

### **Not everyone agrees on what tech companies should do**

While moderating the meth-using communities may seem like a predictable next step for tech companies, not everyone agrees on how to approach the situation.

Numerous addiction specialists and caretakers emphasized the role of teaching personal responsibility to patients.

Fawcett said he tells his patients, “This world is out there, what are you going to do as a person to protect yourself and make better choices?”

He also believes that tech companies should grapple with how to moderate meth content more actively.

“I think there’s just really no accountability,” he said. “I would just personally like to see more supervision for some of these rooms in these spaces.”

Some companies like Meta have made clear attempts to intervene in such communities, but they continue to pop up.

Paul believes that any effort to moderate the communities will be futile, and that now platforms have an incentive — keeping users on their websites — to keep meth content online.

	<p>“There are loads of fringe platforms waiting to jump in,” he said, referring to user backlash against Reddit and Tumblr after they imposed stricter moderation. “You can’t stop the signal.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/12 Texting Russians about war in Ukraine</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/using-a-new-cyber-tool-westerners-have-been-texting-russians-about-the-war-in-ukraine-11647100803">https://www.wsj.com/articles/using-a-new-cyber-tool-westerners-have-been-texting-russians-about-the-war-in-ukraine-11647100803</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>People around the world are using a new website to circumvent the Kremlin’s propaganda machine by sending individual messages about the <a href="#">war in Ukraine</a> to random people in Russia.</p> <p>The website was developed by a group of Polish programmers who obtained some 20 million cellphone numbers and close to 140 million email addresses owned by Russian individuals and companies. The site randomly generates numbers and addresses from those databases and allows anyone anywhere in the world to message them, with the option of using a pre-drafted message in Russian that calls on people to bypass President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a>’s <a href="#">censorship of the media</a>.</p> <p>Since it was launched on March 6, thousands of people across the globe, including many in the U.S., have used the site to send millions of messages in Russian, footage from the war, or images of Western media coverage documenting <a href="#">Russia’s assault on civilians</a>, according to Squad303, as the group that wrote the tool calls itself.</p> <p>The initiative is one among a number of efforts, mainly by Western media organizations and governments, that are trying to puncture the tight controls Mr. Putin’s government has imposed within Russia on reporting about the conflict, which Russian media <a href="#">are banned from describing as a war</a>.</p> <p>Since its forces invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, the Kremlin has shut down all independent media in Russia or censored their coverage. Access to Western social networks such as <a href="#">Twitter</a> has also been curtailed. <a href="#">Authorities this week threatened to ban Meta Platforms</a> Inc.’s Facebook and Instagram, and a new law stipulates that anyone publishing “fake news” about Russia’s campaign in Ukraine could face 15 years in prison.</p> <p>“Our aim was to break through Putin’s digital wall of censorship and make sure that Russian people are not totally cut off from the world and the reality of what Russia is doing in Ukraine,” a spokesman for Poland-based Squad303 said.</p> <p>The spokesman, a programmer who asked not to be identified, likened the effort to such Cold War-era projects as <a href="#">the U.S.-funded Radio Free Europe</a>, which beamed radio programs in several languages across the Iron Curtain. Nearly seven million text messages and two million emails have been sent using the website since it was created a week ago, he said.</p> <p>The name of the group derives from a British air force unit made up of Polish pilots famed for their contribution in the battle against Nazi Germany. <a href="#">The website they created</a>, 1920.in, is a reference to the Soviet-Polish war of 1920 in which outnumbered Polish forces fended off a Soviet invasion.</p> <p>The Journal reviewed the websites’ code as published by the authors and tried several numbers served by the database, which turned out to be in service. Whether the entire database is made up of existing numbers and email addresses couldn’t be verified.</p> <p>Titan Crawford, who sells trucks in Portland, Ore., is one of thousands of people who have been using the tool to communicate with Russians and shared their exchanges on social media.</p> <p>Mr. Crawford, 38 years old, said he had messaged 2,000 mobile-phone numbers in Russia. Most people never responded, others reacted with expletives, but 15 people engaged in conversation, he said.</p>



To prove that he is an ordinary American, Mr. Crawford said, he sent a Russian engineer photos from his vacation in Hawaii. The man responded with pictures of his family holiday in Estonia on the Baltic Sea. Mr. Crawford then sent images of Ukraine coverage by mainstream U.S. broadcasters such as CNN.

His intention was, he said, to gain the trust of the Russian people he communicates with so they could come to him for uncensored information about what Mr. Putin was doing in Ukraine.

“The whole idea is to educate Russian people about what’s going on so they can rise up and stop their government from invading countries,” Mr. Crawford said.

“Having lived in the U.S. all my life, only now I am starting to understand the concept of not having freedom of speech. My heart goes out to the Ukrainians, but now I have some sympathy for the Russians, too, because they have been brainwashed.”

Dey Correa, a 33-year-old mother from Panama, said she sent 100 emails to random Russians after seeing the bombing of a maternity hospital in Mariupol, Ukraine.

“This situation is horrible, I feel so sad, and I wish to do something....I have a seven-month-old baby, and I couldn’t stop crying when I saw so many babies having to flee bombs,” Ms. Correa, who trained as a civil engineer, said.

Ms. Correa says she received 20 replies. Most were belligerent—one sender, who mistook her for a U.S. citizen, said he would throw a nuclear bomb on America—but others were more engaging. One owner of a beauty salon answered that she was Russian, but not a supporter of Mr. Putin.

Receiving such messages could present risks for some residents of Russia. Russian police were filmed checking people’s mobile phones and reading their communication following a string of antiwar protests in recent days.

A Russian mother of three from the southeastern city of Saratov who had been sent information about the war in Ukraine by a Dutch man using the Squad303 tool said that it caused her pain to see what was going on. She had received images of terrible destruction and civilian casualties, the woman, age 36, said.

“It pains me to see this, and it’s very hard to deal with everything that’s happening...I am very worried,” she wrote in response to a message from The Wall Street Journal.

A law student from Moscow, age 25, who also engaged with a Western person to say that she didn’t support Mr. Putin’s war on Ukraine, told The Wall Street Journal that she had no interest in publicly speaking up against the war for fear of retribution.

“Am I supposed to risk my education, my future?” she said.

“I know Putin is killing people in Ukraine, but it is not my fault, I am not killing anyone, and I am not supporting any wars,” she said.

Thomas Kent, a former president of Radio Free Europe who now lectures at Columbia University, said the West now has a moral responsibility to circumvent the Kremlin crackdown on the free flow of information by using tools such as the one developed by Squad303. The tool provided an opportunity to converse with concerned Russians willing to receive information, he said.

“If Russian authorities didn’t think that ordinary people could undermine their power, they would not censor the media so thoroughly,” Mr. Kent said.

In Latvia, a Baltic nation that was once part of the Soviet Union, Karlis Gedrovics, a chief executive of an advertising group called Inspired, said he had sent 100 messages to phones in Russia by using the Polish programmers’ tool.

	<p>“This is the time when every single person should engage, it’s not enough to put the Ukrainian flag on your social media,” Mr. Gedrovics, who is 43 and fluent in Russian, said. “Putin has paid troll armies and a big propaganda machine, but in our democracies we should respond with a civil movement.”</p> <p>Mr. Gedrovics speaks fluent Russian and has engaged with a number of Russians, most of whom responded with insults or repeated official propaganda.</p> <p>“It would be foolish to expect they would change their minds, or admit to having changed their minds, quickly...the state has interfered in their private lives so much that they can’t express opinions contrary to the propaganda,” he said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/11 Russia widens social media crackdown</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/11/russia-widens-social-media-crackdown-by-blocking-i/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/11/russia-widens-social-media-crackdown-by-blocking-i/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Russian regulators said Friday that internet users will be blocked from accessing Instagram because it’s being used to call for violence against Russian soldiers, in Moscow’s latest move to tighten up access to foreign social platforms.</p> <p>The communications and media regulator, Roskomnadzor, said in a statement that it’s restricting national access to Instagram because the platform is spreading “calls to commit violent acts against Russian citizens, including military personnel.”</p> <p>Facebook parent Meta Platforms, which also owns Instagram, didn’t respond immediately to a request for comment.</p> <p>Roskomnadzor specifically cited a Thursday tweet by Meta spokesman Andy Stone conveying a company statement saying it had “made allowances for forms of political expression that would normally violate our rules on violent speech, such as ‘death to the Russian invaders’.”</p> <p>Stone’s statement followed a Reuters report that Meta was making a temporary change to its hate speech policy to allow Facebook and Instagram users in some countries to call for violence against Russians and Russian soldiers in the context of the Ukraine invasion.</p> <p>The statement stressed that the company “still won’t allow credible calls for violence against Russian civilians.”</p> <p>Russia has already blocked access to Facebook, limited access to Twitter and criminalized the intentional spreading of what Moscow deems to be “fake” reports, as part of President Vladimir Putin’s crackdown on social media and news outlets like the BBC.</p> <p>Big tech companies, meanwhile, have moved to restrict Russian state media from using their platforms to spread propaganda and misinformation, especially for European users.</p> <p>Google has blocked European users from viewing YouTube channels operated by RT and Sputnik, which TikTok has disabled their European accounts. Meta has barred Russian state media from Instagram and Facebook.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/11 YouTube blocks Russia state-funded media</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/mar/11/youtube-blocks-russian-state-funded-media">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/mar/11/youtube-blocks-russian-state-funded-media</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>YouTube announced on Friday that it had begun blocking access globally to channels associated with Russian state-funded media, citing a policy barring content that denies, minimizes or trivializes well-documented violent events.</p>

The video platform had previously blocked the channels, specifically those of [Russia](#) Today and Sputnik, across Europe.

YouTube announced the move in a Twitter post and said that while the change was effective immediately, “we expect our systems to take time to ramp up”.

The platform, which is owned by [Google](#), said Russia’s invasion of Ukraine now fell under its violent events policy and violating material would be removed.

A YouTube spokesman, Farshad Shadloo, said the blocking of the Russian outlets was in line with that policy.

YouTube also said it was now removing content about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine that violates its policy on material that “minimizes or trivializes well-documented violent events”. The Kremlin refers to the invasion as a “special military operation” and not a war.

YouTube previously paused YouTube ads in Russia. Now, it is extending that to all the ways it makes money on the platform in Russia.

Russian state media have called restrictions placed on them by distributors, which include app stores and other social media services, unjustified censorship.

“The blocking by YouTube is nothing but a new turn of an atrocious attack on one of the fundamental principles of a democratic society – that is freedom of the press,” Sputnik said in a statement on Friday.

YouTube declined to specify which and how many channels had been blocked globally, or whether they ever would be restored.

Workers across Google had been urging YouTube to take additional punitive measures against Russian channels, accusing them of spreading false narratives about the Ukrainian leadership and civilian deaths during the war, according to three employees at the company.

The move comes as Russia has taken up an increasingly aggressive stance against US tech companies that have taken measures to curb Russian disinformation on their platforms.

Russia on Friday moved to block Instagram after its parent company, Meta, said it would allow calls for violence against [Vladimir Putin](#) and Russian soldiers involved in the invasion of Ukraine to appear on the social media platform in Ukraine. The Russian government [blocked access to Facebook](#) last week. The blocks further limit most Russians’ access to outside information on the war.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Ukraine IT army switches to war footing</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/keyboards-warriors-ukraines-it-army-switches-to-war-footing">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/keyboards-warriors-ukraines-it-army-switches-to-war-footing</a>
GIST	<p>“We had a plan for when the war started,” says Bogdan Nesvit, the 30-year-old co-founder of Ukrainian tech developer Holy Water. “We relocated the female part of the team to Poland. With men not allowed to leave the country, we are all working between bomb shelters and hotels.”</p> <p>Nesvit is now sharing a hotel room with six of his 80 colleagues in western <a href="#">Ukraine</a> (“It is like a dorm”). He is one of the country’s army of almost 300,000 tech workers who have embarked on an unprecedented migration to keep their businesses running during the Russian invasion.</p> <p>The hotel where he is now based has turned its gym into a makeshift communal office space – Nesvit estimates it is being used by around 100 workers around the clock – as the relative safety of the west of Ukraine has made it the focus of relocation plans put into play by domestic and international businesses.</p>

Nesvit's well-rehearsed evacuation – buses were pre-booked to leave from the company's offices in Kyiv, which served as a rally point for staff and family members as soon as war broke out – is typical of plans put into action by Ukraine's 8,700 IT-focused companies in cities across the country.

Ukraine's tech industry is a \$6.8bn juggernaut that has more than tripled in size since 2016, with 25,000 new graduates joining the ranks of workers annually. It is overwhelmingly young – 80% are aged 18 to 32 years old – and had aimed to grow to as much as \$16.3bn by 2025 before the outbreak of war. And it is fighting back.

Nesvit is a prime example. He used to live in London, studied at Oxford and then University College London (UCL), and worked for the UN in New York and British American Tobacco in London and Ukraine before setting up his own business.

"Ukraine is one of the best countries in the world in terms of technical talent, cost and quality of living," he said. "Salaries in the Ukraine and US are hugely different, but the talent is of the same skill level. It is a shame the war is happening as the IT industry here is growing so fast."

The industry has been on a war footing since Russia took control of Crimea and stirred conflict in the Donbas in 2014. These so-called "business continuation plans" were dusted off when Putin launched his ["peace-keeping" incursion into the east of Ukraine](#) as a precursor to a [full invasion](#).

Sensing the threat, the IT Ukraine Association tested the sector's readiness at the start of February with a survey question that would be unthinkable coming from a trade body in most countries: "Does your company have an emergency response plan for such cases as large-scale combat operations, lack of internet access, power outage etc?"

More than 90% said they already had, or were developing, plans to keep Ukraine's tech sector able to continue to service domestic and international clients.

"It is about measures and actions to protect and make operations safe and able to continue," says Konstantin Vasyuk, the association's executive director. "Relocating vulnerable workers, ensuring data is in the cloud, alternative internet connections, transferring staff and specialists to western parts of Ukraine and countries in [Europe](#). Things that can, and have, to be implemented very fast."

And so far, the plans to maintain digital resilience have helped defy expectations about the level of disruption expected from the full-scale invasion by Russian forces.

Tech consultancy Star, which employs about 600 of its 1,000 global workforce in Ukraine and counts blue chip firms such as Lufthansa, Toyota and WPP as clients, says it is running at 60% of pre-war levels.

"We hadn't expected operations to stay at anything like that level," says Star founder Juha Christensen, the former senior Microsoft executive who also founded software company Symbian and is current chair of Bang & Olufsen. "It has been one of the real surprises."

Christensen says that the approach taken by the company, which paid staff two months' salary in advance of the invasion in case the banking system was hit, was partially inspired by Israeli companies which, given local tensions, always have contingency plans in place.

He says that 18% of its Ukrainian workforce has moved to Poland and Germany, mostly the female employees, a further 49% are scattered through western Ukraine, and a third remain in Kyiv and central Ukraine, "mostly by choice".

In addition to employees, Star has relocated about 2,000 family members into western Ukraine, Poland and some into Germany. About a dozen staff have chosen to join the military effort.

“We are going out of our way to make everything voluntary, including whether or not you continue to work on client projects,” says Christensen, who has turned over a house he owns in Germany for use by refugees.

“Kyiv is a large city, about half the size of London in population, and probably square kilometres too, and there are some that live in safer neighbourhoods and have an infrastructure around them. It is a big decision to get up and move, and a lot of patriotic people don’t want to move.”

Nazar Sheremeta, solutions architect for CloudMade, a joint venture between Star and French conglomerate Valeo, has decided to stay in Kyiv, effectively waging what has become akin to a form of internationally-backed corporate resistance across the country, with workers refusing to allow their businesses to capitulate in the face of the invasion.

“I want to help as much as possible in retaining our customers, since financial stability of the company affects my financial stability, which is hugely important in such times,” he said in a message to the London-based chief executive of CloudMade, who reassured him that the company has “strong support” from its biggest client with “no indication that will change”.

Sheremeta’s sentiments were echoed time and again by companies the Guardian spoke to, but he also gave insight to the mounting mental pressure of trying to work while being at war.

“I am trying to distract myself with working matters as much as possible,” he explains in another message. “Otherwise you are simply looking into the news 24/7, and your nerves end out spiralling out of control. Obviously, I am also monitoring mental health to not burn out people too much right now.”

Sheremeta signs off with a touchingly optimistic and defiant tone. “Hopefully this is just a minor set back, and we could achieve some stability once again,” he says, ending with a half-quip. “Preferably with Russian surrender of course.”

While the idea of the vast Russian army surrendering may be fanciful, it is clear that the invasion has not gone according to plan – with Ukraine’s IT army playing its role.

Alexandra Ganzha works for Ukrainian-based IT company Obrio, which has found itself based in Poland after most staff were abroad on a corporate holiday when the war started. He says most workers now operate on three shifts: working on client projects, helping friends and relatives, and volunteering.

The latter spans the spectrum from finding food sources to sharing news on where to find clean water, driving trucks, sharing petrol and relocating people. It also includes turning IT skills to cyber guerrilla warfare.

“We have a fair portion of our people with PhDs in data science, machine learning and of course cyber security, so a fair number are trying to do everything they can to help out,” says Christensen, who next week is relocating to a Star delivery centre in Poland that now serves as a base of operations and link to Ukraine. “Guerrilla warfare can be very effective. Lots of little projects can add pressure. It goes way beyond distributed denial of service (DDOS) attacks on systems.”

The digital resistance ranges from soft-power tasks such as attempting to influence public opinion in Russia via social media, raising funds for the war effort (Nesvit has raised more than \$40,000 by selling NFTs – non-fungible tokens – of charity works by more than 200 Ukrainian artists), and direct hacking of systems by joining groups such as Anonymous.

“Not everyone is good with a gun,” says the IT Ukrainian Association’s Vasyuk. “People should be used as efficiently as they can. We are fighting with guns, with laptops, we will keep on going.”

## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	03/14 DOJ declassified FBI files Operation Encore
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.floridabulldog.org/2022/03/more-declassified-fbi-documents-to-be-made-public-soon/">https://www.floridabulldog.org/2022/03/more-declassified-fbi-documents-to-be-made-public-soon/</a>
GIST	<p>The Justice Department has notified a federal judge in New York that within days it expects to release another 1,000 pages of declassified FBI documents about Operation Encore, the bureau's <i>sub rosa</i> investigation of possible Saudi government complicity in 9/11.</p> <p>The release of those records will be in response to President Biden's September <a href="#">executive order</a> mandating a sweeping declassification review of "certain documents concerning the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001." To date, more than 700 FBI documents have been released totaling more than 2,700 pages.</p> <p>Biden's order effectively overturned a 2020 decision by Trump administration Attorney General William Barr to invoke the rarely used state secrets privilege to keep records about Operation Encore hidden from the public.</p> <p>Thursday's notification letter to U.S. Magistrate Judge Sarah Netburn from the New York U.S. Attorney who is overseeing the government's participation in the extensive civil lawsuit brought against Saudi Arabia by 9/11 victims also states, "It is anticipated that there may be further releases of information into mid-April, due to continuing coordination with a number of foreign governments and ongoing interagency review."</p> <p>In addition, because records produced publicly will contain redactions required by the Privacy Act, the FBI will create separate sets of documents that remove those redactions for use by lawyers for the 9/11 families and victims.</p> <p><b>FBI DOCUMENTS FROM GRAND JURY</b></p> <p>Expected to be included in the coming releases are "passages containing analysis of telephone, banking, financial, credit and communication records" obtained via a grand jury subpoena. Earlier this month, Netburn granted a government request to make public those grand jury materials.</p> <p>The Pentagon seen from a highway minutes after American Airlines Flight 77 hit on 9/11. Photo: U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Jason Ingersoll</p> <p>A grand jury in New York was part of the Encore investigation that focused on what agents believed was a support network for two 9/11 hijackers, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar.</p> <p>Hazmi and Mihdhar were part of a five-member al Qaeda team that on 9/11/01 hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 after leaving Dulles International Airport and crashed it into the Pentagon, killing 59 passengers and crew, and another 125 people in the building.</p> <p>Declassified Operation Encore documents previously released included significant new information about a trio of Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs officials operating inside the U.S. who are suspected of aiding Hazmi and Mihdhar. One of those figures was Mutaib al Sudairy.</p> <p>A 2010 FBI document says that in Columbus, MO, Sudairy lived "with Ziyad Khaleel for about four months in 2000, Khaleel was a known key communications equipment procurement officer for UBL [Usama bin Laden] and provided satellite phones used in the 1998 US embassy bombings in Africa." A 2016 FBI report says Khaleel likewise "managed wire transfers from IARA [Islamic American Relief Agency] to bank accounts controlled by UBL." It also noted that Sudairy's phone number was found in the address book of suspected Saudi intelligence agent Omar al Bayoumi after 9/11. Bayoumi was one of a trio of Saudis at the center of the Encore investigation for providing critical assistance to Hazmi and Mihdhar shortly after their arrival in the U.S. in January 2000.</p>

**BACK TO FLORIDA**



The appearance of Khaleel in the FBI's narrative brings the 9/11 case back once again to Florida. The reason: another of his former roommates, Muneer K. Arafat, was an imam from 2000-2003 at a Sarasota-area mosque run by the Islamic Society of Sarasota/Bradenton. He also later served as imam at the Boca Raton Islamic Center.

Arafat gained notoriety in June 2005 when he testified as a government witness at the high-profile terrorism trial of University of South Florida professor Sami Al-Arian. Arafat, who admitted being paid \$35,000 by the U.S., claimed Al-Arian tried to recruit him in 1988 into joining a faction of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

According to a Dec. 8, 2003 Florida Department of Law Enforcement report obtained by *Florida Bulldog*, a source told FDLE and FBI agents, "Arafat was a member of the Islamic Brotherhood, who follows a radical belief...and wishes harm to the United States."

That same year, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that Arafat testified about his involvement with Khaleel, who also went by the name Ziyad Sadaqa, before a federal grand jury in December 2002. Arafat, a Kuwaiti of Palestinian descent, was transported from Sarasota to St. Louis to testify following his November 2002 arrest for overstaying his visa, the paper said.

Khaleel/Sadaqa died in a car accident in Saudi Arabia in 2002.

In an interview with the *Post-Dispatch*, Arafat said he and Khaleel raised \$20,000 in 2000 for the Holy Land Relief Foundation. In 2001, the U.S. designated the Holy Land group a terrorist organization, and claimed that its leaders were members of Hamas, the militant Islamic group. The foundation is now defunct.

"Arafat said he opposed terrorism and had no reason to believe that the money that Sadaqa sent to the Holy Land Relief Foundation went for anything other than orphans and medical care," the newspaper wrote.

### **AN IMAM'S CONNECTIONS**

Arafat's name and phone numbers were also found in the cell phone address book of Wissam Hammoud following Hammoud's January 2004 arrest in Sarasota for weapons violations and attempting to kill a federal agent and witness. Hammoud pleaded guilty a year later and was sentenced to 21 years in prison. The U.S. Bureau of Prisons, which has classified Hammoud as an "international terrorist associate," lists Hammoud as due for early release in September.

Sarasota private detective Bill Warner has tracked Arafat, 57, for years – ever since Warner's involvement with U.S. Immigration and Customs (ICE) agents and the Sarasota Police Department as a confidential informant in a terrorism investigation that began in June 2002.

"My involvement consisted of supplying surveillance photos, background checks and cell phone records," Warner said. "I obtained the cell phone records of at least 24 individuals, and phone numbers of who they called, linked to the Islamic Society of Sarasota and Bradenton, various used car lot owners in Tampa and Sarasota and Imam Muneer Arafat.

"The FBI office in Sarasota was aware of my activity as the local Sarasota Police Department reported directly to them any information I supplied. ICE investigation became a hot issue as it linked to terrorism and was taken over by the FBI in 2003," Warner said.

"Imam Muneer Arafat in my opinion and from my experience was a double agent. He worked for (the) FBI as a paid confidential informant from 2002-2003, wearing a wire in support of terrorism investigation in Sarasota Fl. and was part of the advance team in early 2000 for 9/11 hijack pilots Mohamed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah also in Sarasota County," Warner said.

Arafat is believed to have been deported in 2007. He is now living in Amman, Jordan

They trained at nearby Venice Municipal Airport. Atta and Shehhi were at the controls of the two passenger jets that struck the World Trade Center. Jarrah led the al Qaeda team that took over United Airlines Flight 93 and crashed it into a Pennsylvania field after passengers fought back.

### **SARASOTA CONNECTIONS**

According to a 15-page FDLE report from April 2004, Hammoud also told authorities that while Arafat was the spiritual leader of the Islamic Society of Sarasota and Bradenton in 2000 and 2001 he played soccer on its property with Abdulaziz al-Hijji.

Al-Hijji “brought with him a friend to the soccer games. Hammoud advised that this friend was Adnan el Shukrijumah,” the report says.

Shukrijumah, a former Miramar resident, later became a suspected al Qaeda leader. The U.S. had a \$5 million bounty on his head until he was killed by Pakistani troops in December 2014.

*Florida Bulldog*, working with Irish author Anthony Summers in 2011, reported that Atta and other 9/11 figures spent time at the Sarasota-area home of Abdulaziz and Anoud al-Hijji, a Saudi couple with ties to the royal family who two weeks before the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington abruptly quit their home – leaving behind cars, clothes, jewelry and food in the refrigerator.

FBI records later obtained by *Florida Bulldog* during Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) litigation state that agents found “many connections” between the Sarasota Saudis and “individuals associated with the terrorist attacks on 9/11/2001.”

A second FOIA lawsuit filed by the *Bulldog* against the FBI in 2016 uncovered the existence of Operation Encore, which later became both a central focus of the New York lawsuit against Saudi Arabia and President Biden’s September executive order.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 New ISIS leader brother of slain caliph</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/exclusive-new-islamic-state-leader-is-brother-slain-caliph-baghdadi-sources-2022-03-11/">https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/exclusive-new-islamic-state-leader-is-brother-slain-caliph-baghdadi-sources-2022-03-11/</a>
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD, March 11 (Reuters) - The new leader of Islamic State, whose appointment the group announced on Thursday, is the brother of slain former caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, according to two Iraqi security officials and one Western security source.</p> <p>Islamic State named its new leader Abu al-Hassan al-Hashemi al-Quraishi in a recorded audio message distributed online.</p> <p>The announcement came weeks after the death last month of Abu Ibrahim al-Quraishi, the man who in turn succeeded Baghdadi in 2019 and became the group's second so-called caliph. Both Baghdadi and Quraishi died by blowing themselves and family members up during U.S. raids on their hideouts in northern Syria.</p> <p>Islamic State, a successor to al Qaeda's notoriously bloodthirsty Iraq branch, has its roots in an Islamist insurgency against U.S. forces after they invaded Iraq and toppled Sunni Muslim dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003.</p> <p>Islamic State in its current form emerged from the chaos of the civil war in neighbouring Syria last decade and took over vast swathes of Iraq and Syria in 2014. Baghdadi declared an Islamic caliphate from a mosque in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul in 2014 and proclaimed himself caliph of all Muslims.</p>

Islamic State's brutal rule, during which it killed and executed thousands of people in the name of its narrow interpretation of Islam, came to an end in Mosul when Iraqi and international forces defeated the group there in 2017.

Its remaining thousands of militants have in recent years mostly hid out in remote territory but are still able to carry out significant insurgent-style attacks.

#### CLOSE BAGHDADI AIDE

The new leader's real name is Juma Awad al-Badri, he is Iraqi and Baghdadi's elder brother, two Iraqi security officials told Reuters on Friday. A Western security official confirmed the two men were brothers, but did not specify which was older.

It is the first time this has been revealed since Islamic State announced the new leader. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorised to speak to media.

Little is known about Badri, but he comes from a close circle of shadowy, battle-hardened Iraqi jihadists who emerged in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S. invasion.

"Badri is a radical who joined salafi jihadist groups in 2003 and was known to always accompany Baghdadi as a personal companion and Islamic legal adviser," one of the Iraqi security officials said.

The official said Badri has long been head of Islamic State's Shura Council, a leadership group that guides strategy and decides succession when a caliph is killed or captured.

Research by the late Iraqi Islamic State expert Hisham al-Hashemi published online in 2020 said Badri was leader of the five-member Shura Council.

The audio recording announcing the new leader said he had been named by Quraishi as his successor before his death.

Badri's nom-de-guerre, also Quraishi, indicates that like his brother and his predecessor he is believed to trace his lineage from the Prophet Mohammed, giving him religious clout among fellow jihadists.

Iraqi security officials and analysts have said that the new leader will continue trying to wage attacks across Iraq and Syria and that he might have his own vision for how those attacks are carried out.

#### NEW SECURITY THREAT

One of the Iraqi security officials who spoke to Reuters on Friday said Badri had recently moved across the border from Syria, where he has been holed up, and into Iraq.

Badri will inherit control over financial resources that are significant, according to a report written in December by the United Nations sanctions monitoring team.

"Recent assessments ... put the group's reserves at between \$25 million and \$50 million," it said, but added that Islamic State spends more than it earns, relying on "opportunistic extortion, looting and kidnap for ransom."

Badri has two other brothers, one detained for years by Iraqi security services, the Iraqi security official said. The other brother's whereabouts is not known, but he is believed to be another Islamist radical, he said.

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HEADLINE	03/13 Afghan aviators hide; Taliban offer amnesty
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/asia/afghan-air-force-taliban.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/asia/afghan-air-force-taliban.html</a>

KABUL, Afghanistan — Last year, the three Afghan aviators served in the elite Special Mission Wing of the Afghan Air Force. Trained by Americans to fight the Taliban from the air, they were some of the Afghan military's most elite troops.

Now they are on the run, hunted by the Taliban while moving their families from one safe house to the next. When the Taliban recently invited former air force members to join the new government's fledgling air force, promising them amnesty, they never considered it.

"No chance," said one pilot, who said he flew attack helicopters on three dozen combat missions against the Taliban. "They would kill us, of course."

But at least 4,300 former Afghan Air Force members have joined the nascent air force, according to the Taliban air force commander in Kabul and former government air force members. Among them are 33 pilots, the commander said.

The Taliban's amnesty offer has confronted American-trained pilots, mechanics and flight crews with an agonizing decision: Trust the new government not to punish them and come out of hiding, even as there are confirmed reports of retribution killings and disappearances, or remain underground indefinitely.

Like other former aviators, the three former Special Mission Wing members said the Taliban would surely seek revenge because they had killed Taliban fighters. They spend their days trying to contact their former American trainers, begging for help getting out of the country.

For their safety, The New York Times is not publishing their names. More than 100 former members of the Afghan security forces were killed by the Taliban or disappeared at their hands in just the first two and a half months of the militants' rule, Human Rights Watch reported in November.

A lieutenant who served as a Special Mission Wing sensor operator, helping to target insurgents for airstrikes, said he felt abandoned by his American allies, and that his relatives and neighbors have faced questions and threats from Taliban members searching for him.

With few exceptions, former Afghan security forces are not eligible for the visas issued by the State Department to qualifying interpreters and other Afghans who worked for the U.S. government or military. For them, there is no clear pathway out of the country to safety.

"The Americans spent all this time and money to train us for elite missions, but now they've just left us behind, where we could be killed," the lieutenant said.

The aviators who have elected to join the Taliban ranks say they have not been harmed or threatened, but they also say that they have not been paid and that they lack full-time work because most of the fleet is not operational.

"I didn't have much choice," said Sgt. Sayed Rahmatullah Janati, a former Afghan Air Force Blackhawk mechanic who now works for the Taliban on the American-made helicopters. "I had to find a way to support my family."

Muhammad Karim, a mechanic and air force sergeant who once repaired AC-208 light attack airplanes, said he rides a bicycle 90 minutes from his Kabul home to the military airport because he can't afford taxi or bus fare. There are few spare parts, he said, so he cannibalizes parts from damaged planes to try to recondition a few aircraft to fly.

A fraction of the 81 aircraft in the Kabul military airport are functional, according to Col. Muhammad Sadiq, the Taliban air force commander for Kabul and 12 provinces. They include six repaired Blackhawks, he said.

Former aviators said there were four airworthy Blackhawks and four working C-208 utility planes among the usable fleet when Kabul fell.

Of the 131 aircraft in the Afghan fleet last summer, departing U.S. forces sabotaged 80 of them, rendering them [unusable](#), according to a U.S. government report. And about 25 percent of the remaining aircraft were [flown out of the country in August by Afghan Air Force pilots](#) to avoid Taliban capture.

But the Taliban cannot easily rebuild or fly the aircraft without the American-trained pilots, mechanics and crew members who once flew and maintained the fleet. Even they have their limits because until last summer much of the [repair work, maintenance and training](#) was carried out by U.S. contractors.

Colonel Sadiq, the Taliban commander, said he piloted Soviet-made SU-22 attack planes for Afghanistan's Communist government three decades ago and was asked by the Taliban shortly after the takeover to oversee the new air force for the region around Kabul. Except for a small one-time stipend, he said, he had not been paid — but he said he hoped salaries would arrive soon.

In an interview in a nearly empty office building at the Kabul military airport, where damaged aircraft lined the deserted tarmac, Colonel Sadiq said former aviators had no need to be afraid.

"We respect you," he said, echoing other government officials. "Please come back and serve your country."

The acting defense minister, Mawlawi Muhammad Yaqoub, also announced in January that former aviators were welcome to return.

"We will respect them and treat them better than the previous government," he said. "They are Afghanistan's assets."

Sergeant Karim, 26, the mechanic, said he had struggled with his decision to return. "I went to the airport that first day with lots of fear, but supporting my family was more important," he said.

He said he was last paid his \$200 monthly salary in July, under the former government, and had little left to support his wife and infant daughter. The Taliban has paid him one stipend of about \$28 but no salary, he said. Yet he continues to report to work.

"What choice do I have?" he asked.

Sergeant Janati, the Blackhawk mechanic, agreed, but said of the Taliban, "They need us, too."

The three Special Mission Wing members said they had hidden or destroyed documents and other items connecting them to their previous service. They were short-haired and clean-shaven while serving, but they now wear bushy beards and longer hair to fit in under the new regime.

They live in constant fear, they said. A former Special Mission Wing captain and M-17 helicopter pilot said his brother was shot and killed by Taliban gunmen who burst into the family home at night, seeking the captain, who had moved out.

Some members of the [8,000-strong](#) Afghan Air Force and the [1,200-person](#) Special Mission Wing were evacuated or fled Afghanistan on their own. But former personnel and their families numbering in the thousands remain in the country, said David Hicks, a retired Air Force brigadier general and chief executive of [Operation Sacred Promise](#), which has assisted former air force members since the Taliban takeover.

General Hicks said the group had [helped evacuate](#) nearly 1,000 former aviators and their families, and had vetted another 2,000 who are seeking to flee.

Like other Afghan citizens, the aviators may apply to the United States as refugees, but they must do so from a country outside Afghanistan and wait there a year or more for a decision.

“We recognize that it is currently extremely difficult for Afghans to obtain a visa to a third country,” the State Department said in an email, adding “and like many refugees may face significant challenges fleeing to safety.”

The former aviators may also apply for humanitarian parole to the United States, a lengthy process that requires extensive documentation and considerable paperwork, as well as travel to another country. The three former aviators said they had been unable to reach anyone in the U.S. government bureaucracy for assistance or guidance.

Of the approximately 44,500 humanitarian parole applications submitted by Afghans since July 2021, about 2,250 have been denied and 200 approved, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

“The United States maintains a solemn obligation to helping our Afghan brothers and sisters who have helped us,” Army Maj. Rob Lodewick, a Pentagon spokesman, wrote in an email. “These are not just words. Daily, our shared obligation transforms into deeds and action.”

Since the Taliban takeover, he said, several hundred former Afghan Air Force personnel and family members had been relocated to the United States through a program led by the Department of Homeland Security.

But inside a darkened home in Kabul, the former sensor operator said that he and 11 other former aviators he keeps in touch with believed they had been abandoned by the United States because they were no longer needed.

“We fought together and lived together with the Americans to keep our country safe for democracy — that’s what they told us,” he said.

“We were there for them in their time of need,” he added. “Now we are in need and they are nowhere for us.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Iran claims missile barrage Iraq; retaliation</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-claims-missile-barrage-us-consulate-iraq-83428598">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-claims-missile-barrage-us-consulate-iraq-83428598</a>
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD -- Iran claimed responsibility Sunday for a missile barrage that struck near a sprawling U.S. consulate complex in northern Iraq, saying it was retaliation for an Israeli strike in Syria that killed two members of its Revolutionary Guard earlier this week.</p> <p>Iraq’s Foreign Ministry on Sunday summoned Iran’s ambassador to protest the attack, calling it a flagrant violation of the country's sovereignty.</p> <p>No injuries were reported in Sunday's attack on the city of Irbil, which marked a significant escalation between the U.S. and Iran. Hostility between the longtime foes has often played out in Iraq, whose government is allied with both countries.</p> <p>The attack drew harsh condemnation from the Iraqi government, which called it a “violation of international law and norms” and demanded an explanation from the Iranian leadership. Iraq’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Ahmad al-Sahhaf told The Associated Press that the ministry summoned the Iranian ambassador, Iraj Masjedi, to deliver the diplomatic protest.</p> <p>The United States strongly condemned the strike and said it was an unjustified attack on a civilian residence.</p>



“We will support the Government of Iraq in holding Iran accountable, and we will support our partners throughout the Middle East in confronting similar threats from Iran,” the White House national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said in a statement. “The United States of America stands behind the full sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Iraq.”

No U.S. facilities were damaged or personnel injured, State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters in Washington. The U.S. had no indication the attack was directed at the United States, he said.

Iran’s powerful Revolutionary Guard said on its website that it attacked what it described as an Israeli spy center in Irbil. It did not elaborate, but in a statement said Israel had been on the offensive, citing the recent strike that killed two members of the Revolutionary Guard. The semi-official Tasnim news agency quoted an unnamed source as saying Iran fired 10 Fateh missiles, including several Fateh-110 missiles, which have a range of about 300 kilometers (186 miles).

The source claimed the attack resulted in multiple casualties. There was no immediate comment from Israel on the allegations or the Iranian missile barrage.

An Iraqi official in Baghdad initially said several missiles had hit the U.S. consulate in Irbil, which is new and unoccupied, adding that it had been the intended target of the attack. Later, Lawk Ghafari, the head of Kurdistan’s foreign media office, said none of the missiles had struck the U.S. facility but that residential areas around the compound had been hit.

Following a Cabinet meeting, the Iraqi government in Baghdad reiterated its refusal to allow Iraq to be used to settle scores between other countries and said it has requested an explanation from the Iranian leadership.

Satellite broadcast channel Kurdistan24, which is located near the U.S. consulate, went on air from their studio shortly after the attack, showing shattered glass and debris on their studio floor.

The attack came several days after Iran said it would retaliate for an Israeli strike near Damascus, Syria, that killed two members of its Revolutionary Guard. On Sunday, Iran’s state-run IRNA news agency quoted Iraqi media acknowledging the attacks in Irbil, without saying where they originated.

The missile barrage coincided with regional tensions. Negotiations in Vienna over Tehran’s tattered nuclear deal hit a “pause” over Russian demands about sanctions targeting Moscow for its war on Ukraine. Meanwhile, Iran suspended its secret Baghdad-brokered talks aimed at defusing yearslong tensions with regional rival Saudi Arabia, after Saudi Arabia carried out its largest known mass execution in its modern history with over three dozens Shiites killed.

Iraqi security officials said there were no casualties from the Irbil attack, which they said occurred after midnight and caused material damage in the area. They spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

One of the Iraqi officials said the ballistic missiles were fired from Iran, without elaborating. He said the Iranian-made Fateh-110 missiles likely were fired in retaliation for the two Revolutionary Guards killed in Syria.

U.S. forces stationed at Irbil’s airport compound have come under fire from rocket and drone attacks in the past, with U.S. officials blaming Iran-backed groups.

The top U.S. commander for the Middle East has repeatedly warned about the increasing threats of attacks from Iran and Iranian-backed militias on troops and allies in Iraq and Syria.

In an interview with The Associated Press in December, Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie said that while U.S. forces in Iraq have shifted to a non-combat role, Iran and its proxies still want all American troops to leave the country. As a result, he said, that may trigger more attacks.’

	<p>The Biden administration decided last July to end the U.S. combat mission in Iraq by Dec. 31, and U.S. forces gradually moved to an advisory role last year. The troops will still provide air support and other military aid for Iraq's fight against the Islamic State.</p> <p>The U.S. presence in Iraq has long been a flash point for Tehran, but tensions spiked after a January 2020 U.S. drone strike near the Baghdad airport killed a top Iranian general. In retaliation, Iran launched a barrage of missiles at al-Asad airbase, where U.S. troops were stationed. More than 100 service members suffered traumatic brain injuries in the blasts.</p> <p>More recently, Iranian proxies are believed responsible for an assassination attempt late last year on Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi.</p> <p>And officials have said they believe Iran was behind the October drone attack at the military outpost in southern Syria where American troops are based. No U.S. personnel were killed or injured in the attack.</p> <p>Al-Kadhimi tweeted: "The aggression which targeted the dear city of Irbil and spread fear amongst its inhabitants is an attack on the security of our people."</p> <p>Masrour Barzani, prime minister of the semi-autonomous Kurdish-controlled region, condemned the attack. In a Facebook post, he said Irbil "will not bow to the cowards who carried out the terrorist attack."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 China claims Afghanistan mineral wealth</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-pursues-afghanistans-mineral-wealth-after-u-s-exit-11647172801?mod=hp_listb_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-pursues-afghanistans-mineral-wealth-after-u-s-exit-11647172801?mod=hp_listb_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>MES AYNAK, Afghanistan—Following the <a href="#">American exit from Afghanistan</a>, China's move to claim the country's vast mineral wealth is centered on a mountain south of Kabul.</p> <p>The mountain and the barren surrounding valley, in Logar province, a two-hour drive from the capital, contain one of the world's biggest untapped reserves of copper.</p> <p>China is negotiating with Taliban authorities to start mining at the site, called Mes Aynak, according to Chinese and Taliban officials. Beijing is also in talks to begin work on oil-and-gas reserves in the north of the country, Amu Darya. Both projects were on hold for years because of the war, which ended when the Taliban seized power in August.</p> <p>Dozens of Chinese mining companies have descended on Kabul in recent weeks seeking contracts for other mines.</p> <p>U.S. officials say they are concerned that China will fill the vacuum left by the American withdrawal from Afghanistan. Beijing developed a relationship with the Taliban in recent years and kept its Kabul embassy functioning when Western missions fled the Taliban takeover.</p> <p>Iran, another U.S. rival, is in talks to secure a huge iron ore deposit in the west of the country. Tehran, too, has fostered good ties with the Taliban.</p> <p>Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries, but its mountainous geology contains huge riches: gold, precious stones, coal, oil and gas, lithium, and rare-earth minerals. China already controls most of the world's rare-earth minerals, which are used to manufacture a variety of technologies, including components in electric vehicles and smartphone touch screens.</p> <p>American experts a decade ago estimated the value of <a href="#">Afghanistan's mineral resources</a> at \$1 trillion. While the U.S. deployed tens of thousands of troops there and spent hundreds of billions of dollars, it was never able to unlock this bounty.</p>

“The rest of the world have extracted their mines and have used them for their countries’ development while we were engaged in war for 43 years and, hence, our resources have remained untouched,” said the Taliban’s minister for minerals and petroleum, Shahabuddin Dilawar.

Mr. Dilawar said he wants American and other Western companies to also come to Afghanistan now that the American military presence is gone. He said he would prefer American mining companies over Chinese companies because of their expertise.

With commodities in a bullish cycle that could keep prices buoyant for years and the end to fighting between U.S. forces and the Taliban, the time might be right for mining in Afghanistan, according to analysts.

Neal Rigby, a mining consultant who formerly advised the Pentagon and the Afghan government on Afghanistan’s mining assets, said the world is facing a shortage of copper.

“Hence the importance of Afghanistan and its minerals endowment,” Mr. Rigby said. “If you look around the world, everywhere has been explored to hell. But Afghanistan is wide open.”

Mining looks like the Taliban’s best chance of creating big new business activity as it grapples with the economic collapse that was triggered by their takeover. The new government, which has been cut off from international aid, needs to raise revenue fast and provide jobs for a population facing mass starvation.

Yet for Western companies, U.S. and international sanctions on the Taliban mean that dealing with Afghanistan is risky, while environmental and human-rights standards and security concerns also loom large.

Mr. Rigby said Mes Aynak held the highest-grade copper, which is why China wanted it so badly—to ship home and blend with its own lower-grade copper.

He said that Mes Aynak was a world-class reserve but that there are likely more such deposits to be found in what is believed to be a central Afghanistan copper belt.

The copper has one big complication: It sits under the ruins of a vast ancient city, Mes Aynak, dating back about 2,000 years. Mes Aynak was a grand outpost of a Buddhist civilization that thrived in Afghanistan and what is now northwestern Pakistan centuries before Islam rose.

Mes Aynak flourished between the first and seventh centuries. There are Buddhist monasteries, stupas, graveyards and wall paintings. The eastern flank of the mountain is covered with antique structures that formed the city.

Mr. Dilawar said that the antiquities would be protected but that authorities hadn’t decided how. His preference would be to move the whole city to somewhere nearby and reconstruct it. Many prize artifacts have been shifted to the Kabul Museum.

Noor Agha Noori, who served as Afghanistan’s director of archaeology until the Taliban takeover, when he left the country, said excavation of the site was about 70% complete after a decade of work on it. “No mining should be done until the excavation is finished,” he said.

He said that if the Chinese were prepared to mine underground through tunnels, which would enable the city ruins to remain where they are, it would take at least three more years of archaeological excavation before mining could begin.

If the Chinese plan to do open-pit mining, which means digging from the surface, eating up the whole mountain, seven to 10 years would be needed to document and move the ancient remains. Under that

scenario, more than half of the antiquities would be lost and the archaeological integrity of the site gone, he said, because it isn't possible to relocate everything.

There is also copper in the valley adjacent to the mountain, which doesn't have ancient ruins on it.

China's state-owned mining company [Metallurgical Corp. of China](#), which was awarded the contract for Mes Aynak in 2007 by the then-U.S.-backed government in Kabul, didn't respond to a request for comment. After it won the contract, mining never began because of the scale of the antiquities discovered, the war and disagreements over terms with the Afghan government.

The mining minister said the contract required China to build a power plant that would supply energy to the site, surrounding area and Kabul; process the copper in Afghanistan; construct a railway to the Pakistani border at Torkham; transfer the antiquities; and buy land from villagers.

The Chinese company has tried to back out of all those obligations, he said. "We want them to stand by their commitments. We're committed to ours as well," Mr. Dilawar said. "We have given two projects to the Chinese, and we may not give them a third until we see practical actions in those two."

China's ambassador in Kabul, Wang Yu, confirmed that talks were going on over the Mes Aynak copper mine and the Amu Darya oil and gas project in the north. He, however, said that better terms were needed to make the investment worthwhile for the Chinese. "It is very important that both parties have reasonable returns," Mr. Wang said.

State-owned China National Petroleum Corp., which never developed the three exploratory blocks in the Amu Darya basin that it was awarded by the Afghan government in 2011, didn't respond to a request for comment. The basin, centered in neighboring Turkmenistan, is the most abundant hydrocarbon resource in Central Asia and a mainstay of Turkmenistan's economy.

The Mining Ministry, unlike some of the other departments taken over by the Taliban, is busy, with businessmen regularly turning up in a flurry of SUVs. The ministry has signed contracts on some new small-scale mines, the minister said.

Entrepreneurs have come calling to discuss mining the lithium and rare-earth deposits, which are considered to be the big prize in Afghanistan, but the mining minister said those wouldn't be tendered yet.

"Given China's stranglehold on the global rare-earths market—and the West's commitment in blood and treasure to Afghanistan—allowing China to stroll in and harvest Afghanistan's rare-earth riches seems both unwise and unfair," said Alan Dowd, senior fellow at the Fraser Institute, a Canadian think tank.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Convening Authority: 10yrs jail Majid Khan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/convening-authority-takes-action-on-sentence-in-u-s-v-majid-khan/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/convening-authority-takes-action-on-sentence-in-u-s-v-majid-khan/</a>
GIST	<p>In accordance with his authority under 10 U.S.C. § 950b, the Convening Authority for military commissions, Mr. Jeffrey D. Wood, took action Friday in the case of United States v. Majid Khan.</p> <p>Pursuant to his plea, Mr. Khan was found guilty in February 2012 of conspiracy, murder in violation of the law of war, attempted murder in violation of the law of war, providing material support for terrorism, and spying. He was subsequently permitted to withdraw his plea to providing material support for terrorism after a federal court ruling that the offense was not triable by a military commission.</p> <p>In October 2021, after a sentencing hearing at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a panel of military officers sitting as a military commission sentenced Mr. Khan to 26 years of confinement. The panel also recommended Mr. Khan receive clemency.</p>

	<p>Consistent with the terms of the pretrial agreement, the Convening Authority has approved a sentence of 10 years of confinement.</p> <p>Pursuant to a 2021 modification to the original 2012 pre-trial agreement, the Convening Authority agreed to reduce the sentence to 11-14 years. Additionally, Mr. Khan received one-year of credit off his sentence from a military judge in the case.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 FBI documents link Saudi spy to 9/11?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/columnists/mike-kelly/2022/03/13/sept-11-fbi-links-saudi-arabia-spy-attacks/9442454002/">https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/columnists/mike-kelly/2022/03/13/sept-11-fbi-links-saudi-arabia-spy-attacks/9442454002/</a>
GIST	<p>Soon after the 9/11 attacks two decades ago, the FBI quietly launched an investigation into a seemingly obscure Saudi Arabian government bureaucrat in Southern California.</p> <p>The man claimed to be nothing more than a Saudi aviation official who innocently happened to befriend two Islamic jihadists in the months before they carried out the 9/11 attacks.</p> <p>That story now appears to be false. The alleged aviation official was really a Saudi spy who reported directly to a Saudi prince who happened to be the kingdom's influential ambassador in Washington and a close friend of President George W. Bush and other top U.S. government officials.</p> <p>The FBI concluded five years ago that there was a "50/50 chance" that this Saudi spy knew ahead of time that the two Islamists he befriended were about to join the plot to hijack commercial jetliners and crash them into buildings in what turned out to be America's deadliest terrorist attack. But the FBI refused to go public with its findings — until now.</p> <p>The story of the spy and the ambassador-prince emerged in recent days as the centerpiece of a startling series of revelations in <a href="#">a newly declassified FBI report</a> that could shed light on a perplexing mystery that has long shadowed the 9/11 investigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did Saudi government officials play a role in America's deadliest terror attack?</li> <li>• If so, what sort of role?</li> <li>• And who else was involved?</li> </ul> <p>While heavily redacted, the report offers the most direct link yet between the Saudi government, its secretive royal family and the team of 19 operatives of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terror network who hijacked four jetliners on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001. The terrorists crashed two jetliners into New York's World Trade Center, another into the Pentagon in Northern Virginia and a fourth, which was reportedly headed to the U.S. Capitol, into a farm field in Pennsylvania.</p> <p>Nearly 3,000 people died in that mass murder-suicide scheme. But for two decades, a major question has shadowed the inquiry into how a band of 19 Islamic extremists pulled it off: Did the Saudi government offer assistance to the terrorists?</p> <p><b>Saudi spy connections detailed</b></p> <p>A 510-page secret FBI report, written in 2017 and declassified last week without any fanfare by the FBI or Justice Department, concludes that the California-based Saudi spy, Omar al Bayoumi, not only helped several 9/11 hijackers to find housing in San Diego, but that there was a "50/50 chance" he "had advanced knowledge" of their deadly plans.</p> <p>For years, top FBI leaders and Justice Department officials kept this potentially explosive information secret, refusing to tell Congressional investigators, the 9/11 Commission and the more than 10,000 American citizens who had signed on to a massive federal lawsuit that seeks to link Saudi officials to 9/11.</p> <p>The findings in the FBI report are coming to light just as the Biden administration is reportedly reaching out to several oil producing nations — including Saudi Arabia — to increase production and help</p>

curtail [rising gas prices across the United States](#). Whether the FBI's report will impact negotiations with Saudi oil officials remains to be seen. But for decades, critics have pointed to Saudi Arabia's oil reserves and their importance to the economies of many western nations as a reason the U.S. has not pushed harder for more information on alleged Saudi links to 9/11 and other Islamist-based terrorist attacks.

Before the 9/11 attacks, the FBI report says, Bayoumi was on the payroll of Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan Al Saud, the kingdom's influential U.S. ambassador who was so close to the Bush administration and visited the White House so often that he was nicknamed "Bandar Bush."

The FBI concluded that Bayoumi regularly passed intelligence findings to Bandar. But the report does not say whether Bayoumi told Bandar that he had met with two members of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terror network who had flown to California in late 2000 to begin preparations for attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Bayoumi helped the two find an apartment in San Diego. He also introduced them to several members of a Saudi-financed mosque in Los Angeles.

The two al-Qaeda operatives later made [their way to northern New Jersey](#), where they met with other 9/11 conspirators, rented cars, opened bank accounts and postal boxes, exercised at a local gym and hung out at Macy's and other stores at the Willowbrook Mall in Wayne.

The FBI report does not say whether Bayoumi knew they left California — or, if he did, whether he offered them advice on how to travel to New Jersey. Nor does the report say whether Bayoumi ever told Prince Bandar whether he knew about the 9/11 attacks before they took place.

Compiled after years of outspoken concerns and criticism from 9/11 victims about a possible Saudi connection to the plot, the report and its findings were kept secret by FBI and Justice Department officials until late last week. The report was released as part of an ongoing [executive order by President Joe Biden](#) last September to declassify the FBI's trove of 9/11 investigative files.

In the days leading up to the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks last September, Biden had been under intense pressure by 9/11 victims and their relatives, along with several key members of Congress, to release the FBI's secret investigative files. Some victims and relatives even threatened to stage protests or boycotts at 9/11 anniversary ceremonies if Biden showed up without ordering the FBI to open its files.

Since Biden's executive order, the FBI has declassified a steady trickle of files. But few of the documents offered much insight into the long-rumored Saudi link to the 9/11 plot — until last week.

Clear evidence of a conspiracy between bin Laden's jihadists and Saudi officials has long been scarce. These latest revelations could change that, advocates say. And, if nothing else, this latest report offers one of the most startling glimpses yet into the shadow world of spies and terrorists -- and Saudi royalty.

"It's exactly what we've been saying," said James Kreindler, one of the lead attorneys in a lawsuit by more than 10,000 9/11 victims and relatives against the Saudi government. "Saudi government officials at a high level were integral to the 9/11 attacks."

The Saudi Arabian embassy in Washington — and their American attorneys in the lawsuit — did not respond to requests for comment. The White House did not respond either. The FBI's media office in Washington said in an email: "We have no comment on the documents."

Prince Bander, 73 who is now retired after moving from his U.S. ambassadorship to the head of the Saudi intelligence service and the Saudi National Security Council, and Bayoumi, 63, both live in Saudi Arabia. They could not be reached for comment.

**Victims' families, former agent angered**



The revelations about Bandar and Bayoumi drew an angry response, not just from 9/11 victims and their relatives, but from a former FBI agent who tried to sound an alarm during the summer of 2001 after he found evidence that al-Qaeda operatives had secretly entered the United States.

“This latest report just shows what we have known all along, but disgustingly has taken 20 years to finally be disclosed,” said [Mark Rossini, an FBI counter-terror expert assigned in 2001 to the CIA’s Alec Station team](#), which was tracking several al-Qaeda operatives but deliberately did not alert the FBI when a terrorist team entered the U.S.

Rossini, who was reached at his home in Spain where he has lived since leaving the FBI in 2008 after pleading guilty to illegally accessing secret files on a case unrelated to 9/11, claims he was ordered by CIA officials and threatened with federal charges if he bucked orders and told the FBI about the presence of al-Qaeda terrorists on U.S. soil.

Neither the CIA nor the FBI has ever explained why they did not cooperate on what now seems to be such a basic piece of an important counter-terror investigation — and, therefore, may have prevented the 9/11 attacks.

Brett Eagleson of Middletown, Connecticut, who lost his father in the collapse of the Trade Center's twin towers in lower Manhattan, said the new evidence is a major step forward in the long legal and public relations battle to not only draw attention to Saudi Arabia’s possible links to 9/11 but hold the kingdom’s royal family and other officials accountable.

“For 20 years we’ve seen a helluva lot of smoke,” said Eagleson, who has emerged as one of the most outspoken critics of Saudi Arabia among the 9/11 victims and relatives in their lawsuit against the kingdom. “I think we’ve just found the fire.”

Names of sources and other identifying details in the FBI report are blacked out. Many of the 510 pages consist mostly of lines drawn through entire sentences and even paragraphs. But enough information remains to outline the seemingly strange connection between the spy (Bayoumi), the prince (Bandar) and two rag-tag Saudi-born members of al-Qaeda’s terrorist network, Khalid al Mihdhar and Nawaf al Hazmi.

[Mihdhar and Hazmi were well known al-Qaeda operatives](#) long before they joined the team of 19 hijackers who carried out the 9/11 plot. In late 2000, the CIA tracked Mihdhar and Hazmi from the Middle East to an apartment in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where they met with other members of bin Laden’s network.

What the CIA did not know at the time was that the initial plans were hatched in that meeting to hijack commercial jetliners in America and crash them into buildings — the essential ingredients of the massive attack on Sept. 11, 2001 that caught America by surprise and transformed U.S. foreign policy.

After leaving the Kuala Lumpur apartment gathering, Mihdhar and Hazmi flew to Bangkok, Thailand. With U.S. travel visas in hand, both caught a flight to Los Angeles — not knowing that CIA agents were tailing them.

After Mihdhar and Hazmi landed in Los Angeles, they were soon met by Bayoumi, who helped them find an apartment and introduced them to a handful of Saudis also living in Southern California.

The CIA had no legal authority to continue tracking the two terrorists inside the United States. By law, the CIA is strictly confined to overseas spy operations. Critics have long claimed the CIA should have called in the FBI and its domestic counter-terror squads. But the CIA remained silent and has never explained why it did not immediately summon the FBI.

During the summer of 2001, Mihdhar and Hazmi moved to northern New Jersey, [settling into the Congress Inn motel on Route 46 in South Hackensack](#) and other area motels and apartments. From there, they met with other 9/11 hijackers, including the ringleader, Mohamed Atta, who lived for various periods at motels in Wayne, New Jersey.

A few weeks before the 9/11 attacks, the CIA finally told the FBI that al-Qaeda operatives were on the loose inside America. By then, it was too late to stop them, however. Mihdhar and Hazmi had disappeared with other members of the 9/11 plot.

After the 9/11 attacks, FBI investigators focused attention on Bayoumi and other Saudis in Southern California. But none was ever arrested.

Bayoumi left the United States and returned to Saudi Arabia not long after the 9/11 attacks. While in America, he was described in the FBI report as a “co-optee of the Saudi General Intelligence Presidency” who was paid an undisclosed “monthly stipend” by Prince Bandar. The FBI report, however, does not say whether Bayoumi ever spoke directly with Prince Bandar or communicated by email.

But the report also offers this glimpse on Bayoumi’s role as a spy and his connection to Prince Bandar: “The information AlBayoumi (sic) obtained on persons of interest in the Saudi community in Los Angeles and San Diego and other issues, which met certain GIP intelligence requirements, would be forwarded to Bandar. Bander would then inform GIP of items of interest to the GIP for further investigation/vetting or follow up.”

The 9/11 Commission investigated Bayoumi’s links to Mihdhar and Hazmi before releasing its best-selling report 2004. But neither Saudi officials nor the FBI and the CIA ever spelled out to Commission investigators the extent of Bayoumi’s work as a spy or his connection to Prince Bandar.

Reached this week, the Commission’s chairman, Tom Kean, the former New Jersey governor, said his investigators never learned that Bayoumi was a spy.

“If that’s true I’d be upset by it,” Kean said in a telephone interview, adding, “The FBI said it wasn’t withholding anything and we believed them.”

But Kean also cautioned against jumping to conclusions about the extent of Saudi involvement in the 9/11 plot.

“I think you have to take a look at the evidence,” he said.

The FBI report also does not explain when it formally concluded that Bayoumi was, in fact, a spy. In the years after the 9/11 attacks, a number of media reports speculated that Bayoumi might have worked for the Saudi intelligence service. But there was no formal declaration of Bayoumi’s role until now.

“This is scary,” said Jerry S. Goldman, a New York-based attorney who represents 500 victims in the federal lawsuit against Saudi Arabia. “According to the allegation in the FBI report, the Saudi ambassador is dealing with a guy who dealt with terrorists?”

Tim Frolich, who grew up in Little Falls, New Jersey, and escaped from the 80th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center after it was struck by a hijacked jetliner, said the latest revelations confirmed long suspicions about Saudi links to terrorism. But Frolich, who worked as an accountant for Fuji Bank in the South Tower, also harshly criticized the FBI for withholding the details about Bayoumi for so many years.

“This information obviously should have been out to the family members and to the American public long before now,” said Frolich who lives in Brooklyn. “Certainly the FBI knew a whole lot more than what they said.

Sharon Premoli, who moved to Vermont from her home in Jersey City after escaping from the 80th floor of the North Tower where she worked as a vice president for a financial marketing firm, said she has long suspected that the FBI knew much more than it was telling about the Saudi links to the 9/11 attacks.

“Knowing what we already know,” she said, “how is it possible that we continue to nurture this relationship with Saudi Arabia?”

As for the FBI and its decision to hold back for years what it knew about the spy and the prince and the terrorists, Premoli said: “We feel abandoned.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Iran missiles strike near US compound Erbil</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/asia/iran-missiles-us-consulate-iraq.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/world/asia/iran-missiles-us-consulate-iraq.html</a>
GIST	<p>At least a dozen missiles fired from Iran struck near a United States Consulate compound being built outside the city of Erbil in the Kurdish region of Iraq early Sunday morning, according to Iraqi and U.S. officials.</p> <p>The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and media outlets affiliated with it and the government posted details about the attack, in an indirect claim of responsibility. The missile fire came four days after Iran vowed revenge against Israel for an airstrike in Syria that killed four people, including at least two members of the Revolutionary Guards.</p> <p>Only minor injuries and damage were reported in the attack, which security officials said hit near but not inside the huge new U.S. consulate complex under construction in a sparsely populated area north of Erbil. The minimal impact would suggest that the strike had been calibrated not to bring further retaliation from the United States or Israel, which Iranian-backed media said was the target of the strike. There are no known Israeli sites in Iraq.</p> <p>But the attack also came after nuclear talks between Iran and world powers reached an impasse, and it was unclear what affect it might have on efforts to resume the negotiations.</p> <p>Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi of Iraq condemned the missile strike on Twitter, calling it “an attack on the security of our people.” Masrour Barzani, the prime minister of Iraq’s semiautonomous Kurdistan Region, which includes Erbil, said on Facebook that the city “will not bow to the cowards who carried out the terrorist attack.”</p> <p>Kurdistan’s counterterrorism force said in a statement that 12 ballistic missiles had been fired at a point near the U.S. consulate site, which is still under construction and is not being staffed yet, officials said.</p> <p>The attack used ballistic missiles rather than the rockets commonly used by Iranian-backed militia groups, officials said.</p> <p>Kurdish officials said the consulate site was the target. But one Iraqi news outlet affiliated with an Iranian-backed network of Shiite militias, Sabereen News, reported that the target was two secret Israeli intelligence bases in Erbil, and that the strike was in retaliation for the Israeli air attack that killed two Guards Corps members. And Iranian killing in Syria of two high-ranking members of the <a href="#">Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps</a> of Iran in a recent Israeli air raid. Iranian state television said the targets were “under the supervision of the Zionist regime in Erbil.”</p> <p>Iranian proxies in Iraq last year used drone strikes <a href="#">to target a C.I.A. hangar inside</a> the airport complex in Erbil used by the U.S. military, according to U.S. officials at the time. Iranian-backed groups frequently cite close links between Israeli intelligence and the C.I.A. The new U.S. consulate outside Erbil is intended to be a hub for U.S. government operations, including U.S. intelligence agencies.</p> <p>The sprawling new consulate, one of the biggest U.S. diplomatic missions in the world, is in the Masif area about eight miles from Erbil, which is also home to Kurdish leader <a href="#">Massoud Barzani</a> and other senior officials from his party.</p>

Iraqi political parties including Mr. Barzani's party and a bloc loyal to the Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr are in the process of trying to form a government after elections last year resulted in heavy losses by traditional Iranian-backed parties.

Mr. Sadr, whose coalition is the biggest single bloc in the Iraqi Parliament, and who has had a tumultuous relationship with Iran over the years, condemned the strike. On Twitter, he described the attack as an attempt to sow division, saying the Kurds were "the lung of Iraq and a part of a whole that cannot be divided."

Iraqi President Barham Salih, who is Kurdish, said the timing of the attack was aimed at obstructing the process of government formation. "We must stand firmly against attempts to plunge the country into chaos," he said in a statement.

Since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iran has expanded its security, political and religious influence in the country by funding and training militia groups, some of them with political wings. Over the years, those fighters have battled American troops, Sunni insurgents and the militants of the Islamic State.

Iran has said that its goal is to drive the U.S. military out of Iraq entirely, even in its current role of providing advice and assistance to Iraq's military without engaging in combat. In the past few years, many Iraqis have pushed back against Iran's influence, seeing it as foreign meddling destabilizing their country.

Shortly after the attack Sunday, social media and Telegram accounts affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps posted videos that showed missiles setting off a massive fireball and a giant plume of smoke. Tasnim News Agency, which is affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards, said that in addition to the dozen missiles, 14 BM-21 Grad rockets also struck targets in Erbil.

The governor of Erbil province said two civilians were slightly wounded in the attack. A spokesman for the regional government, Lawk Ghafuri, said that the missiles did not hit the new U.S. Consulate being built about eight miles from Erbil, but that they landed near it. A Kurdish satellite television network, K24, reported that its offices on the same road had been struck. [It posted photos of offices and hallways with collapsed ceilings.](#)

The Revolutionary Guards had threatened to retaliate for the Israeli strike in Syria. The two members of the Guards killed in the strike played a key role in Iran's attempt to provide Hezbollah with [assistance that would make its rockets and missiles much more accurate](#), according to a senior Israeli defense official. The Israeli defense establishment has called on units to upgrade their alert status, mostly in the Air Force and intelligence in light of the threats of retaliation by Iran.

News outlets and social media accounts affiliated with the Guards also said the strike occurred around 1:30 a.m. local time, the same time that Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, was killed by an American drone strike in January 2020. Days after the general was killed, Iran retaliated with missile strikes on an American base in Iraq, injuring about 100 U.S. military personnel.

"This is not at all a coincidence," Sabereen News said of the timing of Sunday's strike.

The strike near Erbil could create another obstacle for diplomatic efforts underway to revive the 2015 deal over Iran's nuclear program. The United States and Iran have been indirectly negotiating in Vienna for months. On Friday, a pause was announced in the talks, after Russia demanded exemptions from sanctions and a written guarantee that it could carry out economic trade with Iran under the deal. The United States refused.

The [new American consulate](#) being built outside Erbil will eventually replace the existing one in a densely populated Erbil suburb, which has been the target of previous attacks. Construction on the new compound, [which will be one of the largest American consulates in the world](#), began four years ago. It had been due to open this year, but progress was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

HEADLINE	03/11 Afghanistan embassy in US shutting down
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/us/politics/afghan-embassy-closing.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/us/politics/afghan-embassy-closing.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Without the backing of a recognized government or money to keep the lights on, Afghanistan’s embassy to the United States is shutting down, State Department officials said on Friday.</p> <p>Afghan diplomats, who were appointed by the former U.S.-backed government and could be under threat by the ruling Taliban if they return home, have 30 days to apply for residency or temporary humanitarian parole to remain in the United States before they risk being deported, the officials said. Although they would not be sent back to Afghanistan, it is not clear where else the diplomats would go, said the officials, who openly hoped the situation would not reach that point.</p> <p>Around 25 diplomats — about one-fourth of the estimated 100 who worked at the Afghan Embassy in Washington or the country’s consulates in New York and Los Angeles — have yet to apply to remain, said two State Department officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive issue more frankly.</p> <p>The development caps a <a href="#">sad saga for Afghan envoys</a>, whose assignment to the United States had marked the pinnacle of their diplomatic careers before being thrown into doubt with the <a href="#">Taliban’s takeover of their government</a> in August.</p> <p>Two months later, Citibank froze the embassy’s bank accounts to avoid violating American sanctions against the Taliban. The economic penalties were imposed years ago, when the Taliban were <a href="#">designated a global terrorist organization</a>. Now that it runs the Afghan government, the Taliban in theory control the country’s central bank, prompting Citibank to seize what one Afghan envoy had described as several hundred thousand dollars in the embassy’s account.</p> <p>That has meant that at least several dozen Afghan diplomats have not been paid since October, and have been living on savings or forced to borrow money to stay afloat. In some cases, envoys have moved their families into cheaper homes to make ends meet.</p> <p>The Afghan ambassador to the United States, <a href="#">Adela Raz</a>, did not respond to a message seeking comment Friday evening, and other diplomats who worked for her could not be reached.</p> <p>Most of the world, including the United States, does not recognize the Taliban as a legitimate government. Until that happens — if it ever does — officials said the State Department would not accredit any diplomats the Taliban sends to Washington.</p> <p>For now, the State Department will oversee the maintenance and security of three properties the Afghan government owns in the United States: a stately Colonial Revival embassy building in Washington, a consulate in Los Angeles and the Long Island residence of the consul general in New York.</p> <p>One of the officials described the development as an unfortunate situation and urged the Afghan diplomats to apply for residency or temporary parole as a way to qualify for work permits and, in turn, find jobs to support themselves.</p> <p>They will join more than 100,000 Afghan applicants who are hoping to remain in the United States in a process that has overwhelmed the Biden administration since Kabul, the Afghan capital, fell in August.</p>
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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	03/14 Today is Pi Day
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SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/pi-day-celebrate-holiday/story?id=83390087">https://abcnews.go.com/US/pi-day-celebrate-holiday/story?id=83390087</a>
GIST	<p>Every March 14, mathematicians, scientists and math lovers around the world celebrate <a href="#">Pi Day</a>, a commemoration of the mathematical sign pi.</p> <p>The date written numerically as 3/14 match the first three digits of the never-ending number: 3.14</p> <p>The unique holiday is one that is discussed by math teachers in schools across the country and bakeries and grocery stores often sell pies at a discount that day.</p> <p>Pi Day was first celebrated in 1988 at San Francisco's Exploratorium, a museum of science and technology that encourages visitors to be hands-on.</p> <p>The holiday was founded by physicist Larry Shaw, who had been an employee of the museum for more than 15 years.</p> <p>His daughter, Sara Shaw, told ABC News her father was at a weekend work retreat when he came up with the idea to link March 14 with pi's first three digits.</p> <p>"He always sort of liked to combine crazy, fun ideas with science and math," she said. "It's a celebration and a coming together of everybody to enjoy something that is based in science but in a fun, educational way."</p> <p>Sara Shaw added, "It's both fun and science, and those things are not mutually exclusive."</p> <p>Thus, Pi Day was born. During the first celebration, the Exploratorium's employees marched around one of the circular spaces of the museum because pi is the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter.</p> <p>It took place at exactly 1:59 p.m., which are the numbers that follow 3.14 in pi, and, after the march, Shaw and his wife set up fruit pies for the workers to eat.</p> <p>Sara Shaw said for the first several years, the celebrations were small and only included the workers of the museum and some visitors.</p> <p>"They used to be pretty small so my memories of them are just like 10 people, and then it grew bigger and bigger," she said. "I moved away for college and then when I came back, it had taken a big leap forward." Even Sara Shaw contributed to the celebration -- although she doesn't remember doing so.</p> <p>Her parents told her that, several years after the first Pi Day, she was in elementary school when she realized March 14 is also Albert Einstein's birthday.</p> <p>For the next Pi Day, Shaw built the so-called "Pi Shrine," which is a circular plaque inside one of the museum's circular classrooms.</p> <p>The workers then did the traditional march around the museum, ending at the Pi Shrine, which was encircled 3.14 times before "Happy Birthday" was sung to Einstein, according to the Exploratorium's <a href="#">website</a>.</p> <p>The holiday has gotten such recognition that in March 2009, the U.S. House of Representatives designated March 14 as Pi Day.</p> <p>"I think he was thrilled that [the day] went from a small and humble beginning to see it grow and grow," Sara said.</p> <p>Pi Day has become an annual tradition at the Exploratorium, and the staff has carried on even after Shaw died in 2017.</p>



"Pi Day is such a special holiday for the Exploratorium," Samuel Sharkland, program developer at the museum, told ABC News. "It started off as a staff gathering and speaks to its magnetism and interest that it's blown up into an international celebration."

He continued, "Sometimes math can be intimidating. But when you have this charismatic number like pi ... there's a lot to explore."

So why is pi considered to be such an important symbol?

Scientists knew for centuries that, regardless of the size of a circle, the circumference and diameter always had the same exact ratio but were unsure of how to calculate it.

The Greek mathematician Archimedes is considered the first person to accurately approximate pi in 250 B.C. after he created an algorithm, which is why pi is sometimes called Archimedes' constant.

Over the next several years, Chinese and Indian scientists made invaluable contributions to the study of pi, adding more digits, and scientists are still trying to learn more digits of pi to the present day.

But pi has significance outside of mathematics. It's been used to help calculate the orbit of planets in the solar system and examine how ripples in rivers carry energy.

This year is the 35th annual Pi Day celebration at the Exploratorium and the first time the museum gets to hold the event in person since 2019 due to the [pandemic](#).

Sharkland said in addition to the parade, food and music, the museum has hired a math artist named John Sims to curate poetry for Pi Day and other works of art.

"What Larry Shaw was able to do was to start a culture around pi," he said. "It's important for people to feel connected to the world around us. The more that people can embrace the fun in mathematics via these celebrations like pie or speaking about your slices of pizza pie, is a small step towards feeling connected."

Sara Shaw said she is happy her dad's mission to bring joy to mathematics is continuing and that Pi Day keeps growing every year.

"Unfortunately, in our society, the concepts of science and math are thought of as being boring and tortuous and lame and for him, these things are exciting and fun and he was really good about sharing that with people," she said.

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HEADLINE	03/13 Tsunami system in need of major overhaul
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/03/13/tsunami-warning-issues-noaa-tonga/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/03/13/tsunami-warning-issues-noaa-tonga/</a>
GIST	<p>The United States' tsunami system is in need of a major update, with ongoing problems that include outdated software, delayed alerts and poor communication to the public, according to a panel of tsunami experts. Its <a href="#">recent report</a> sees "an urgent need for action" and advises the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to overhaul aspects of the system to fix these and other pressing issues.</p> <p>Tsunamis are a series of very long ocean waves generally caused by undersea earthquakes or other events that disrupt a significant amount of ocean water. The U.S. West Coast, Hawaii and Alaska are particularly tsunami-prone, with potential threats found around the Pacific rim. At least 30 reported tsunamis have caused at least one death or \$1 million in damage to the United States as of January 2018, <a href="#">according to NOAA</a>.</p>

As recently as January, tsunami waves [reached the West Coast](#) and advisories were issued across Hawaii, Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California, prompted by the underwater explosion of the Hunga Tonga volcano that sent [shock waves around the world](#).

“Every tsunami is very tricky ... we learn something new every time,” said Rick Wilson, co-chair of the Tsunami Science and Technology Advisory Panel (TSTAP), a group of nonfederal scientists that issued the report and an arm of the NOAA Science Advisory Board. “However, we feel that these recommendations going forward will not only save lives, but potentially millions of dollars in the future for commerce and protection of the coastline from tsunami hazards.”

The 32-page report outlines several areas for improvement, but the most pressing matters involve NOAA’s tsunami warning program and its two tsunami warning centers, located in Honolulu and Palmer, Alaska. Namely, the report points out “perceived gaps and inconsistencies throughout the tsunami forecast and warning process.” Some of the changes recommended are extensive and described as an “overhaul” to ensure accurate, timely and clear warnings of impending tsunami waves.

This year’s report builds on a sweeping 2011 [assessment](#) by the National Academy of Sciences, which found numerous gaps in the nation’s tsunami preparedness and much room for improvement, detailed in a long list of recommendations spanning nearly 200 pages.

While progress has been made on a number of fronts, many key issues remain unaddressed or have not kept pace with changing technology, or new issues have emerged.

#### **‘Antiquated’ warning system in need of an update**

The panel looked closely at the overarching warning system: from the tsunami source to the forecast, to the messaging going out to the public.

“We found that parts of [the] system that they have in place right now are somewhat antiquated and are not capable of making changes that a lot of states and communities are requesting to be changed,” said Wilson.

For example, the two tsunami warning centers in Alaska and Hawaii are relying on outdated software and methods, which limits improving the warning process — including estimating wave-generating potential from earthquakes and other sources. As new and complicated warning issues have arisen over the years, patchwork or “band-aid” fixes have been applied.

The Hunga Tonga volcanic eruption and resulting tsunami Jan. 15 in the South Pacific exposed an issue that the panel had already identified: that NOAA should improve its ability to detect and warn about tsunamis from non-earthquake sources, such as volcanic eruptions and landslides.

For example, because the system is set up to estimate tsunamis generated by earthquakes, [tsunami advisories](#) were issued for Hawaii and the U.S. West Coast relatively late, Wilson said.

“Every day, year or 10 years that goes by makes it more likely that we are going to have a larger event that will really test the system,” said Corina Allen, chief hazards geologist at the Washington Geological Survey and a member of the panel.

What is needed, according to the report, is a “comprehensive, enterprisewide technology upgrade” of the warning system.

For example, the panel’s co-chair, Rocky Lopes, suggested that the centers could have their alerting capability unified under the umbrella of the National Weather Service and brought into its advanced warning platform (known as [AWIPS](#)), which is used to issue timely alerts for all weather events. In analyzing earthquake events, the panel recommended greater collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), which uses more up-to-date earthquake analysis software than is available at the warning centers.

### **Two warning centers, confusing messaging**

NOAA's two tsunami warning centers cover two separate regions. The National Tsunami Warning Center (NTWC) serves Alaska, Canada and the contiguous United States, while the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) covers the Hawaiian Islands, U.S. and British territories in the Caribbean and Pacific, and international coastlines in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

A long-standing problem is that the two centers are not coordinated and do not speak with one voice. It is also difficult for one center to step in and perform the duties of the other if one center is temporarily out of service.

"The warning centers have very capable people and really good scientists, but they operate independently," said Lopes, a former administrator of the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program.

As a result, they may interpret the same event differently or offer different products to their respective regions. For example, the NTWC provides estimated wave heights to Alaska and the West Coast, which states and communities have found valuable for response efforts and to better gauge tsunami hazards. The PTWC, however, does not provide this information to its service areas.

[Tsunami.gov](https://tsunami.gov), the website that serves as the official warning depot for all tsunami events, was established in 2016 and collects warning information from each center in bulletins in near real-time. But when a large earthquake happens, the nature and reach of any potential tsunami threat is far from clear.

"It is not a user-friendly website," said Allen of the Washington Geological Survey. "If you are going there for the first time to try to track these bulletins, it is really confusing."

According to the report, an overall update to the Tsunami.gov website is needed, and it could provide a single national message to summarize the scope of each event. Lopes indicated that the lack of attention to Tsunami.gov is probably because of insufficient staffing, which the panel hopes NOAA will address in its response to the report.

### **Earlier warnings needed for distant tsunamis**

The warning centers issue initial alerts about possible tsunamis within five minutes of an earthquake, but it can take up to three hours to produce a full forecast with estimated wave heights for coastal areas farther from the wave source. That's a problem for coastal emergency managers who need to make important evacuation decisions quickly.

"What we found is that a lot of emergency managers still need about three or four hours at a minimum to pull off their evacuations and their response activities," said Wilson of Tsunami Science and Technology Advisory Panel.

On July 28, 2021, following a magnitude-8.2 earthquake off the coast of Alaska, the threat to the West Coast was listed for several hours as "being evaluated," leaving little time to initiate evacuation plans if they had been needed.

The panel recommends that NOAA provide some estimate of likely impacts to states much earlier. It also points to newer technologies that may quickly detect tsunamis in the open ocean, such as global navigation satellite systems, which could help to speed up the warning process and may be more cost effective than the network of ocean buoys currently used.

The NOAA administrator has one year from January, when the report was received, to respond to the recommended changes. In a letter sent a day after its receipt, NOAA Administrator Rick Spinrad wrote: "Please pass my thanks on to the TSTAP for their diligence and careful attention to this important topic. We will give this report the attention and follow up that it so well deserves."

HEADLINE	03/12 WA hosts world's 3 <sup>rd</sup> largest nuclear arsenal
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/what-russias-nuclear-escalation-means-for-washington-state-home-to-the-globes-third-largest-atomic-arsenal/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/what-russias-nuclear-escalation-means-for-washington-state-home-to-the-globes-third-largest-atomic-arsenal/</a>
GIST	<p>Beneath the commercial and recreational vessels and island-bound ferries that navigate Puget Sound on any given day, something else swims secretly armed with a payload sufficient to permanently reshape a continent.</p> <p>Eight hulking Ohio-class nuclear attack submarines, each nearly as long as two football fields and armed with a spectrum of nuclear weapons, call Naval Base Kitsap at Bangor on the Kitsap Peninsula home. At any given moment, seven of them are armed with nuclear warheads and discreetly traversing the Pacific Ocean while one refuels at Bangor.</p> <p>These warheads make Washington state host to the globe's third-largest arsenal of deployed nuclear weapons — an estimated 1,120 — behind only Russia and the United States as a whole, whose stockpiles still number in the thousands, despite decades of reductions, according to the Federation of American Scientists.</p> <p>One weapon in particular on those subs is at the apex of relevance in its short life: The W76-2, a reduced-payload nuclear warhead designed to counter Russia. It was rushed into production by the Trump administration and greenlighted by Congress in anticipation of a moment precisely like this one — a Russian invasion of a friendly nation, where President Vladimir Putin's "escalate to de-escalate" doctrine could inch the world's nuclear superpowers closer and closer to an exchange.</p> <p>Bellevue's U.S. Rep. Adam Smith, a Democrat and chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, worries that the warhead's reduced yield would make it more tempting for a president to use. Even if the rival nations refrain from trading nuclear strikes, Smith knows well that every twitch from a nuclear superpower creates a cascade of ripples to other nuclear-armed states, and could kick-start a new arms race.</p> <p>"It's an important moment for the entire country and the entire world, including Washington state," said Smith in an interview last week after being briefed by the Pentagon on the situation in Ukraine. "It's a more dangerous and potentially conflicted world, and we're all going to have to reckon with it cautiously."</p> <p>It would take many steps of escalation for Ukraine to turn into a nuclear exchange involving Russia and the U.S., according to Hans Kristensen, who closely tracks nuclear forces worldwide at the nonprofit Federation of American Scientists in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>Among them: Putin using a nuclear weapon in the conflict zone, or the U.S. being drawn into active combat.</p> <p>"At the outset, it would require a direct military clash of some magnitude between Russia and NATO," Kristensen said. "I don't think there's a snowball's chance in hell that nuclear weapons would come into play in Ukraine. That's crazy, even for Putin."</p> <p>Putin wasted no time escalating nuclear rhetoric after his military began its invasion of Ukraine just over two weeks ago, moving his arsenal to high alert on the fourth day.</p> <p>As Russia's attack met unexpectedly stiff resistance, U.S. intelligence officials noted that Russian military strategy favors escalating conflicts as a means of controlling them, particularly when conventional forces are overwhelmed.</p> <p>To stave off any gains that advantage Ukraine, Putin has bracketed the conflict with political red lines that threaten to tip the nuclear balance: No NATO combatants, no no-fly zone and no aerial intervention from neighboring states.</p>

The U.S. opted not to follow Russia's lead and did not elevate the alert status of its nuclear weapons. The Pentagon also canceled a scheduled test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile days after Putin's announcement.

That has fostered optimism among some nuclear scholars and key members of Congress that Russia and the United States will keep their nukes holstered.

"Let me reassure the public: I do not think we are on the brink of a nuclear conflict," Smith said. "Putin is not suicidal."

### **A new weapon**

In January 2020, life on the Olympic Peninsula carried on normally. Spectators were treated to an underground tour of Port Angeles, patrons swarmed community art shows and seats at casinos were full. Patches of dry weather provided hikers forest refuge from the long Pacific Northwest winter.

But in the waters off the Kitsap Peninsula, an important shift between nuclear-armed nations was taking shape. That month, the U.S. armed its nuclear attack subs with the new W76-2 warhead, a fresh addition to the inventory that would change decision-making processes about the nuclear strategies of Washington, Moscow, Beijing and Pyongyang, North Korea.

The new small-scale nuke was strapped on missiles in subs alongside its high-yield, city-busting cohorts, the W76-1 and W88. Subs based at Bangor troll the Pacific armed with a mix of 630 nuclear warheads, while 490 more sit in storage in the Strategic Weapons Facility located next to the submarine base.

The W76-2 warhead was born on paper in February 2018, on page 18 of former President Donald Trump's 100-page unclassified Nuclear Posture Review. It also called for a new nuclear warhead for sea-launched cruise missiles on Navy ships. New presidents have been conducting these studies for a quarter century to adjust U.S. nuclear doctrine for changing times and to reflect their priorities.

The U.S. at the time had barely waded into its most ambitious update to the nuclear arsenal since the Cold War, a planned 30-year, \$2 trillion refresh.

Although the modernization campaign began under the Obama administration, Trump's review strayed dramatically from the four presidents who preceded him. The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a defense-oriented Washington, D.C., think tank, noted at the time of the posture review's release that it "appears to place increasing emphasis on nuclear weapons as an instrument of national power."

Instead of minimizing nuclear weapons, it emphasized them, even as significant arms-control accords between the U.S. and Russia crumbled. In 2019, the U.S.' count of nuclear warheads saw its first year-over-year growth since 1996, according to the U.S. State Department.

Trump's most ambitious nuclear decision was creation of the W76-2 warhead, carried primarily on subs based at Bangor, which cover the Pacific Ocean, and Kings Bay, Georgia, whose Atlantic fleet covers the current conflict zone in Ukraine.

Despite objections in Congress, primarily from Democrats, and arms control experts, the warhead was rushed into production in just 14 months and for a total of \$94.6 million, according to the Congressional Research Service. Both figures constitute marvels of efficiency from the production network of private contractors.

But at what cost to nuclear stability, critics ask? "There is no such thing as a 'tactical' nuclear weapon," Smith said, referring to the alternate name for low-yield warheads.

"In this era when we know exactly what nuclear weapons are, and we have nuclear weapons five, 10, 20 times more potent than we had in World War II, introducing the idea of tactical nuclear weapons is

dangerous. It will not be manageable. Once a nuclear weapon is used, we cannot promise our response will be proportional.”

Proponents of the W76-2 point to the Cold War as evidence that the U.S. can show restraint with nuclear weapons, even when their capabilities are vast, according to the Congressional Research Service.

### **“Escalate to de-escalate”**

This is precisely the moment the W76-2 warhead’s critics and proponents pondered as it was debated. The warhead was created to counter Russia, which relies heavily on tactical, or low-yield, nuclear weapons.

“The W76-2 was sold to Congress and the public on precisely these kinds of scenarios,” Kristensen said. “It was sold as a strategic, prompt response to an early first use of a tactical weapon. But it could be applied to any use.” Trump’s Nuclear Posture Review mentions Russia by name as the adversary driving the U.S. to add the new warhead.

The W76-2 packs a yield about one-third to one-half that of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and is not designed to be a city-destroyer, like some of its counterparts also in missiles silos, on planes and on the Bangor-based subs. Instead, its utility in the conflict in Ukraine is to respond if Russia uses a small nuke first.

It’s a realistic scenario based on what U.S. intelligence knows about Moscow’s nuclear doctrine, described as “escalate to de-escalate.”

“Russia may also rely on threats of limited nuclear first use, or actual first use, to coerce us, our allies, and partners into terminating a conflict on terms favorable to Russia,” according to the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. Based on Putin’s doctrine, Pentagon leaders worry Russia could resort to using nuclear weapons, especially the low-yield variety, if its conventional forces fall behind in the fight.

“Potential adversaries, like Russia, believe that employment of low-yield nuclear weapons will give them an advantage over the United States and its allies and partners,” John Rood, Trump’s undersecretary of defense for policy, said in February 2020. The warhead provides the U.S. a quick-response option if Russia uses a nuclear weapon first, and reassures allies protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella that they’re well-protected by the U.S. arsenal.

### **A new arms race?**

But there’s concern from critics of the W76-2, including Smith, that its utility in responding to a limited nuclear strike would quickly escalate into full-blown nuclear war, killing up to 100 million people across the globe almost immediately, according to some estimates, and setting the stage for widespread famine and displacement that could kill countless more.

Already, there are signs policymakers are pushing greater reliance on nuclear weapons. On Tuesday, Adm. Chas Richard, head of U.S. Strategic Command, which oversees the military side of the U.S. nuclear weapons program, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee about Russian and Chinese nuclear forces.

“We do not know the endpoints of where either of those other two are going, either in capability or capacity,” he said. But he took the opportunity to endorse a controversial update of U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles that the Congressional Budget Office estimates would cost \$82 billion.

Immediately following Richard’s testimony, Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., an outspoken supporter of the W76-2, tweeted: “The time has come to look at what additional nuclear capabilities we need before China and Russia leave us behind.”

With Trump’s proposed sea-launched cruise missile still up for debate in Congress, it remains to be seen whether Bangor might soon host another new nuclear weapon that upends existing nuclear strategy around the world.



HEADLINE	03/12 Planes stranded in Russia unrecoverable?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/business/russia-airlines-planes.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=Business">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/12/business/russia-airlines-planes.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=Business</a>
GIST	<p>Hope has faded quickly for a handful of Western companies eager to recover planes leased to airlines in Russia, with the authorities there intent on keeping foreign-registered aircraft within the country and President Vladimir V. Putin openly discussing nationalizing the assets of foreign businesses.</p> <p>As of Thursday, there were 523 aircraft leased to Russian carriers by companies outside the country, according to IBA, a consulting firm. Of those, 101 are on lease to S7 Airlines and 89 to Aeroflot. Both airlines have stopped flying internationally, eliminating any chance of repossessing the planes on foreign soil.</p> <p>“The general consensus is: That’s it, we will not be able to recover them,” said Vitaly Guzhva, a finance professor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.</p> <p>Dr. Guzhva and others who attended a recent industry conference in San Diego said the predicament for the leasing companies was the talk of the event, held by the International Society of Transport Aircraft Trading. Experts there generally aligned around the view that the companies were facing the possibility of huge losses, they said. All told, the planes are worth as much as \$12 billion, according to Ishka, an aviation consulting firm.</p> <p>AerCap, the world’s largest leasing company for commercial aircraft, has 142 leased planes in Russia, more than any other company, according to IBA. AerCap declined to comment, but said in a recent financial disclosure that its aircraft in Russia account for about 5 percent of its fleet. SMBC Aviation Capital, which did not respond to a request for comment, is the second-most exposed business, with 35 leased planes in Russia.</p> <p>Under European sanctions, lessors such as AerCap and SMBC, which are based in Ireland, have until March 28 to terminate contracts with the Russian airlines and get their planes back.</p> <p>On Thursday, David Walton, the chief operating officer of BOC Aviation, a leasing company based in Singapore, said the March 28 deadline was “frankly an unrealistic timetable” to get hundreds of planes out of the country. As of late February, Russian airlines were using 18 BOC-owned aircraft, or about 4.8 percent of the company’s fleet.</p> <p>Nick Popovich, whose Indiana firm, Sage-Popovich, performs aircraft repossessions, said he had been contacted by some major global lessors interested in recovering their planes from Russia. He declined to name the companies, but said they mostly acknowledged that it was a lost cause. Mr. Popovich said he was still investigating what could be done, but didn’t immediately see a viable way to recover the planes.</p> <p>“We won’t accept an assignment that we’re not sure we can do,” he said. “I’m still doing research on what we can and can’t do legally.”</p> <p>While a few planes may have been recovered abroad before international flights were halted, they are of little use to their owners without the meticulous maintenance records that accompany every aircraft and are often stored by airlines themselves, experts said. And the longer a plane is stuck in Russia, the greater the concern that work on the jet’s body, engines and flight systems may not be logged, causing its value to plummet.</p> <p>“Unless you have those records, the aircraft is virtually worthless,” said Quentin Brasie, the founder and chief executive of ACI Aviation Consulting. “They’re literally more important than the asset itself.”</p>

The financial consequences of the planes' being held in Russia could be far-reaching, too. Such aircraft are financed in a variety of ways, including funding from banks, leasing companies themselves, and investors in securitized debt.

Insurers and reinsurers may be on the hook, too, experts said. Aviation war insurers, in particular, are concerned and facing their biggest potential losses since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, according to Russell Group, a data and analytics company. Aircraft insurance premiums have been on the rise for years as the industry struggled to counter recent annual losses.

As prices went up during the pandemic, insurers cut coverage, according to Suki Basi, the founder of Russell Group. At the least, the situation in Russia will probably have a similar effect.

"You pay more and you get less coverage," he said. "If it does nothing to premiums, it will do that."

There will be lasting consequences for Russia, too. The crisis is likely to drive up the cost of doing business there generally and may cause some leasing companies and insurers to swear off the Russian market.

And while nationalizing the planes may provide a short-term benefit to Russia in keeping domestic flights moving, it won't be long before carriers there grow desperate for spare parts. With Boeing and Airbus refusing to offer parts and support to Russian airlines, those carriers are likely to start cannibalizing the planes they have on hand, devaluing those aircraft.

Ken Hill, who also performs aircraft repossessions, knows that first hand. Two years ago, a U.S. leasing company hired Mr. Hill to recover three Boeing 737s at a small airport just outside Moscow, he said. The owner of the company that had leased the planes resisted his efforts to recover them, he said, but, after a few days Mr. Hill gained access to the hangar — only to find that the aircraft had been gutted.

"The airplanes were there, but guess what wasn't there? The engines," he said. "They had robbed all three airplanes. They were basically just junk carcasses."

What happens next is anyone's guess, even among experts. "We all have a lot of questions," said David Tokoph, the chief executive of mba Aviation, an advisory firm, summing up the conversations at the San Diego conference. "We all have a lot of opinions. And we don't have a lot of answers."

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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 India: 'malfunction' missile into Pakistan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/india-fires-missile-into-pakistan-after-technical-malfunction">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/india-fires-missile-into-pakistan-after-technical-malfunction</a>
GIST	<p>India has said that it accidentally fired a missile into Pakistan this week because of a "technical malfunction" during routine maintenance, giving its version of events after Pakistan summoned India's envoy to protest.</p> <p>Military experts have in the past warned of the risk of accidents or miscalculations by the nuclear-armed neighbours, which have fought three wars and engaged in numerous smaller armed clashes, usually over the disputed territory of Kashmir.</p> <p>Tensions have eased in recent months, and the incident, which may have been the first of its kind, immediately raised questions about safety mechanisms.</p> <p>"On 9 March 2022, in the course of a routine maintenance, a technical malfunction led to the accidental firing of a missile," the Indian Ministry of Defence said in a three-paragraph statement.</p> <p>"It is learned that the missile landed in an area of Pakistan. While the incident is deeply regrettable, it is also a matter of relief that there has been no loss of life due to the accident."</p> <p>The ministry said the government had "taken a serious view and ordered a high-level Court of enquiry".</p>

Pakistani officials said the missile was unarmed and had crashed near the country's eastern city of Mian Channu, about 500 km (310 miles) from its capital Islamabad.

Pakistan's Foreign Office summoned India's charge d'affaires in Islamabad to lodge a protest over what it called an unprovoked violation of its airspace, saying the incident could have endangered passenger flights and civilian lives.

Pakistan warned India "to be mindful of the unpleasant consequences of such negligence and take effective measures to avoid the recurrence of such violations in future".

After India's admission, Pakistan's National Security adviser Moeed Yusuf said it was "highly irresponsible" of New Delhi not to inform Islamabad immediately of the inadvertent launch of a missile.

"The real circumstances surrounding this incident must also be investigated to ascertain if this was an inadvertent launch or something more intentional," Yusuf said on Twitter.

Ayesha Siddiqi, an expert on military affairs and South Asian matters, wrote on Twitter that "India-Pak should be talking about risk mitigation".

"Both states have remained confident about control of nuclear weapons but what if such accidents happen again & with more serious consequences?"

One senior Pakistani security official told Reuters, on condition of anonymity, that the incident could have escalated into a "critical untoward situation".

"The admission that it was a missile was very nonchalant," he said. "What does this say about their safety mechanisms and the technical prowess of very dangerous weapons? The international community needs to have a very close look at this."

The official said it was possibly a BrahMos missile – a nuclear-capable, land-attack cruise missile jointly developed by Russia and India.

According to the US-based Arms Control Association, the missile's range is between 300km (186 miles) and 500km (310 miles), making it capable of hitting Islamabad from a northern Indian launch pad.

A Pakistani military spokesman told a news conference on Thursday evening that a "high-speed flying object" originating from the northern Indian city of Sirsa had crashed in eastern Pakistan.

"The flight path of this object endangered many national and international passenger flights both in Indian and Pakistani airspace as well as human life and property on ground," he said.

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	03/13 South Chicago: 7 shot at strip mall
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-seven-shot-south-chicago-neighborhood-20220313-mmfbjfbf2bfapqdearprw5znja-story.html">https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-seven-shot-south-chicago-neighborhood-20220313-mmfbjfbf2bfapqdearprw5znja-story.html</a>
GIST	<p>Seven men were shot and injured Sunday afternoon in the city's South Chicago neighborhood, authorities said.</p> <p>The people were shot at a strip mall in the 7900 block of South Exchange Avenue a little after 3:30 p.m., police said.</p>

	<p>At a Sunday news conference, Chicago police Superintendent David Brown said the group was standing near a Little Caesars Pizza when a car pulled up and shots were fired from inside the car. The number of shooters was unclear, Brown said, and it was not yet clear if the shooting was targeted. There was not an exchange of gunfire, he said.</p> <p>“One shooting is one too many,” Brown said. “Whether it was a targeted shooting or an altercation, it’s unacceptable.”</p> <p>All of the victims were taken to area hospitals in serious to critical condition, according to officials.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/13 Tacoma to tackle crime using data</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/city-leaders-will-use-data-to-tackle-increasing-crime-in-tacoma">https://www.q13fox.com/news/city-leaders-will-use-data-to-tackle-increasing-crime-in-tacoma</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>TACOMA, Wash. - The Tacoma Police Chief and Mayor have recently discussed plans to tackle the increase in crime in the city.</p> <p>The mayor says that between 2020 and 2021, the city has averaged more than 30 homicides a year.</p> <p>The chief of police says the city is planning to use city data to focus intervention efforts.</p> <p>"Reflecting on what is happening in the city of Tacoma at this time is extremely challenging," said Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards.</p> <p>Woodards made comments on crime during her state of the city address that ring especially true following a deadly shooting this weekend.</p> <p>"As I mentioned there are many issues of urgency facing the city," said Woodards.</p> <p>The increase in violent crime included a large number of homicides between 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>"Our city was shaken by 31 homicides each year," said Woodards.</p> <p>In addition to homicides, the city also recorded increases in vandalism and property destruction, which was up 15%. Also, the data included a year-over-year increase of nearly 20% in assaults.</p> <p>Motor vehicle thefts were also up by around 66% and the mayor says the city saw an increase of more than 85% in arson cases. She said that is by far the "highest number on record" in the last five years.</p> <p>"We know that everyone is feeling the effects of these crimes," said Woodards.</p> <p>"Crime didn't occur overnight," says Tacoma Police Chief Avery Moore. "We are not going to be able to address it overnight."</p> <p>Chief Moore says the city is in the initial stages of creating a plan to address crime based on data from Tacoma.</p> <p>"It's going to be evidence based," said Moore. "I look forward to the plan and I look forward to community input as it relates to the plan."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/13 Driver on 'rampage' slams into mall; arrest</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/suspected-dui-driver-armed-with-ax-arrested-after-chase-slamming-into-mall/DY3GUBRTW5A45LBFZ7OB7WOQJI/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/suspected-dui-driver-armed-with-ax-arrested-after-chase-slamming-into-mall/DY3GUBRTW5A45LBFZ7OB7WOQJI/</a>

GIST

WHATCOM COUNTY, Wash. — A 32-year-old man armed with an ax and suspected of driving under the influence was arrested after a 9-mile chase that ended with him slamming into some doors and breaking into Bellis Fair Mall in Bellingham on Saturday night, police said.

Bellingham police said the ordeal started at about 10:30 p.m. when a Washington State Patrol trooper requested help from police officers in stopping a person in a Ford Ranger who was driving erratically and suspected of DUI.

The driver of the small pickup had refused to stop in the 1300 block of West Bakerview Road, which is where Bellingham officers started to help, authorities said.

Police said the driver kept going east on the road and toward Northwest Drive before making a U-turn, heading back east on West Bakerview Road.

The driver ran red lights and led officers through the streets of the City Hall complex.

Police said an officer was positioned at Cornwall Avenue near East Campion Street. That is where the driver slowed down, swung an ax out of the window and attempted to hit the officer, who was seated in their patrol vehicle. Police said the man struck the officer's patrol vehicle several times and then drove off, going north on Cornwall.

The driver then made a quick U-turn, drove into the path of more officers and swung the ax out of the window at them, law enforcement officials said.

Police said the man drove to York Street, where an officer was putting down spike strips and the man narrowly missed hitting the officer.

The man fled to Lakeway Driver, where he struck another driver, causing damage to their car, authorities said.

The man fled onto north Interstate 5 and eventually got off at the Bellis Fair Mall exit.

He drove into the mall parking lot and then slammed into the front doors of the mall's food court, where he got out, smashed the glass doors with the ax, ran inside, and then began smashing more glass doors and windows to several stores, restaurants and other businesses inside, police said.

Officers at the scene gave commands for the man to drop the ax as he continued his "rampage," but he refused, police said.

Authorities said officers used several options of less-lethal force -- including flexible batons, chemical irritants and a Taser -- to try to stop the man, but it wasn't until he dropped the ax that they were able to arrest him.

After they took him outside for medical treatment, the man kicked a gurney and knocked it into a firefighter, police said.

The gurney struck the firefighter in the knee and knocked him back.

Police said the suspect was taken to a hospital, where he was treated for minor injuries and suspected substance abuse.

The man will be booked into the Whatcom County Jail on several charges, including first-degree burglary and three counts of first-degree assault, once he is medically cleared, police said.

The Bellingham Police Department said he caused damage to more than 11 stores, businesses and restaurants in the mall. Police have estimated the damage at \$100,000 for the mall alone.

HEADLINE	<b>03/13 Tacoma shooting: 1 dead, 1 injured</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-dead-1-seriously-injured-after-tacoma-shooting/L5UBENPXBFBW7AKTDUCKBUU7SA/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-dead-1-seriously-injured-after-tacoma-shooting/L5UBENPXBFBW7AKTDUCKBUU7SA/</a>
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Police are investigating after a woman was killed and a man was seriously injured in a shooting in Tacoma early Sunday morning.</p> <p>Officers responded before 5 a.m. to the 3800 block of East Howe Street after a man called 911 and said his girlfriend had been shot.</p> <p>Upon arriving at the scene, Tacoma police officers found a 22-year-old woman inside a vehicle and a 23-year-old man nearby who had both been shot.</p> <p>The woman died at the scene.</p> <p>The man was taken to the hospital.</p> <p>He was initially reported to have had life-threatening injuries, but his status was updated to serious but stable, according to the Tacoma Police Department.</p> <p>Neighbors told KIRO 7 that hearing gunfire is new to the neighborhood but it does hit close to home.</p> <p>“I was shocked, but not extremely shocked,” one man said.</p> <p>“It was fast, it was quick and violent,” said Karl Allen. “I heard the first shot. It was the first shot, It was like bam. Then after that, it was a pause, then bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam. Six shots after that.”</p> <p>“When I looked out the window, an individual was running across the front of my house on the phone. And the individuals collapsed on the parking lot next door to my house,” Allen said.</p> <p>One of the bullets from the gunfire also pierced a nearby pickup truck owned by a neighbor.</p> <p>The fatal shooting comes just days after Mayor Victoria Woodards said in the state of the city address: “Between 2020 and 2021, we saw startling increases in some very visible and impactful crime. Our city was shaken by 31 homicides each year.”</p> <p>Things could shake up even more as the city’s current homicide rate could reach about 50 by the end of the year. Sunday’s fatal shooting is Tacoma’s 10th homicide thus far.</p> <p>“We cannot keep our community safe without police. They are part of the solution,” Woodards said.</p> <p>Woodards said public safety correlates to the Tacoma Police Department’s 50 openings and %14 vacancy rate. It’s usually at about 4%. Woodards said Tacoma needs more officers, specifically those who reflect its communities.</p> <p>“Safety means different things to different people. And putting more people on the streets alone doesn’t increase a sense of safety for everyone in our city,” Woodards said.</p> <p>But for the people living in Tacoma’s Mckinley Hill neighborhood that’s exactly what they want to see.</p> <p>“Gang violence has increased in this neighborhood. Escalation of drug sales. This perpetuates these types of incidents. If the may has that much concern about the areas that have this much violence, put a task force out here. Do something about it,” said Allen.</p> <p>The investigation is ongoing.</p>



HEADLINE	03/13 Pierce Co. deputies in 4 shootings this year
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/pierce-county-deputies-more-shootings/281-f064b8ed-b33c-48c5-bd6d-ef89479071f5">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/pierce-county-deputies-more-shootings/281-f064b8ed-b33c-48c5-bd6d-ef89479071f5</a>
GIST	<p>PIERCE COUNTY, Wash. — Pierce County is seeing a rising number of shootings involving police. Data from the Pierce County Sheriff's Department show deputies were involved in three shootings in all of 2021. The county's deputies have already been involved in four this year.</p> <p>It's a pattern some hoped would be reduced by the state's <a href="#">law enforcement reforms</a>.</p> <p>“The new laws that went into effect were to help minimize the amount of force used by officers across the state, especially deadly force. But in a lot of these instances we’re seeing more uses of deadly force,” Sergeant Darren Moss said. “It’s not something the laws have necessarily had an effect on, but we’re just seeing a trend of more deadly encounters with police officers in our county.”</p> <p>Sergeant Moss said the shootings aren’t limited to specific situations, but from a general attitude shift that escalates encounters, which puts deputies in harm’s way.</p> <p>“It feels like there’s a lack of respect for the law, not necessarily just for law enforcement officers, but we’re seeing a lack of respect for the law in general,” he said.</p> <p>Tisha Marie of <a href="#">LegallyBLACK</a> points to a lack of accountability for both criminals and law enforcement. “You have criminals committing criminal activity and you have officers using deadly force and neither of these two scenarios are being disciplined appropriately,” she said.</p> <p>Sergeant Moss said that as COVID-19 restrictions begin to loosen, that may allow Pierce County to <a href="#">open its jail more</a> as a deterrent to would-be and repeat offenders.</p> <p>“Having those people in jail might deter some of this crime and remind people that the law still applies to everybody and we’re not going to let this stuff stand,” Moss said.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Marie said until the issue is addressed holistically, the numbers will continue to rise in Pierce County.</p> <p>“You can open the prisons, and that could mitigate crime, and people could be less likely to commit certain crimes because they don’t want to go to jail, and you can have an officer murder somebody and lose their job and go to jail, and that will prevent other officers from murdering people, but neither of those things are happening,” Marie said. “There’s a rise on both sides, and there’s a lack of accountability on both sides, and I think until those two things are met, we’re gonna continue to see a rise in crime and a rise in police involved shootings.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/13 Man sought in homeless killings NYC, D.C.
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/police-look-for-man-who-killed-1-homeless-man-wounded-2nd/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/police-look-for-man-who-killed-1-homeless-man-wounded-2nd/</a>
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — Authorities are searching for a man who is believed to have attacked multiple people who were sleeping on the streets in Washington, D.C., and New York City, killing two of his victims and injuring three others, police said.</p> <p>District of Columbia police said Sunday in a news release their investigators are working with the NYPD to find the man who fatally shot and stabbed a man Wednesday in the district and killed another man Saturday in New York City.</p>

	<p>The suspect shot and injured two other people experiencing homelessness earlier in the month in Washington and one other person Saturday in New York, police said.</p> <p>“We are committed to sharing every investigative path, clue and piece of evidence with our law enforcement partners to bring this investigation to a swift conclusion and the individual behind these vicious crimes to justice,” Metropolitan Police Chief Robert Contee said in the news release.</p> <p>Police determined the same person committed the attacks based on the similarities of each shooting and evidence recovered from the scenes. The victims were attacked without provocation, police said.</p> <p>New York Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell said in the joint news release the city’s “homeless population is one of our most vulnerable and an individual preying on them as they sleep is an exceptionally heinous crime.”</p> <p>The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is assisting in the investigation.</p> <p>New York Mayor Eric Adams said a task force composed of police officers and a homeless outreach team would focus on finding unhoused people in the subways and other locations and would urge them to seek refuge at city-owned shelters.</p> <p>“The case is a clear and horrific intentional act of taking the life of someone, it appears, because he was homeless,” Mayor Eric Adams said at a news conference. “Two individuals were shot while sleeping on the streets, not committing a crime but sleeping on the streets.”</p> <p>The attacks were reminiscent of the beating deaths of four homeless men as they slept on the streets in New York’s Chinatown in the fall of 2019. Another homeless man, Randy Santos, has pleaded not guilty to murder charges in those attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Seattle police flood downtown; will it last?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/people-are-feeling-safer-after-seattle-police-flood-2-downtown-neighborhoods-but-one-question-looms-will-it-last/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/people-are-feeling-safer-after-seattle-police-flood-2-downtown-neighborhoods-but-one-question-looms-will-it-last/</a>
GIST	<p>Brian Culpepper sat surrounded by tubes of paint and colored markers in his usual spot on the south side of Pine Street on Thursday, his artwork — inspired by comic books, Japanese anime and graffiti — displayed on the side of the building behind him.</p> <p>He said it broke his heart and made his stomach hurt to see downtown taken over by drug users and others bent on lawlessness. He’s had guys offer to sell him handguns for \$100 and shooed away a man last week who had laid out a tarp to hawk what Culpepper assumed were stolen goods.</p> <p>But in the week since the Seattle Police Department <a href="#">flooded Third Avenue between Pike and Pine streets with officers</a> following two deadly shootings and other incidents of street violence, Culpepper and those who frequent the area said it already feels safer.</p> <p>The big question on everybody’s mind, though, is how long will the relative peace last and how long can police maintain the kind of uniformed presence that seems to be deterring the open-air drug dealing that’s long plagued the area locally known as The Blade.</p> <p>Business owners and residents of Little Saigon International District, 1½ miles southeast of the downtown retail core, said they too have seen big changes at 12th Avenue South and South Jackson Street since police broke up an open-air drug market. But they also wondered if the cleaned up streetscape would remain that way.</p> <p>“I want to say good job,” Selas Asrat, a Little Saigon resident in her 60s, said of the police operation in the neighborhood as she was on her way to buy bread. “It was not safe. I’m glad they cleaned this area.”</p>

Sgt. Randy Huserik, a spokesman for Seattle police, said undercover operations were underway at both locations in the weeks before uniformed officers were sent in to provide a visual presence.

“It’s not like those are the only two places in the city where crime is occurring,” he said. “Just because you don’t see a uniformed presence doesn’t mean it’s not being dealt with.”

Criminal charges filed Wednesday against a 23-year-old Seattle man document how a Seattle police officer — wearing street clothes and equipped with binoculars — watched hand-to-hand drug transactions of fentanyl pills in the 1500 block of Third Avenue on Feb. 17 and sent in an arrest team. The officer’s report, written March 5, notes the more-recent violence in the area:

“This specific area has been the subject of multiple complaints regarding drug use/dealing. This area is a well-known crime area to include shootings, stabbings and robberies,” the officer wrote in charging papers. “In the past two weeks, there have been two homicides and one person shot in the face, in this block.”

KV Bui, who with her husband Nick owns Dong Thap Noodles on 12th Avenue, just north of Jackson, said officers used their restaurant and a nearby building to conduct surveillance during the undercover investigation at the intersection.

“It’s amazing how they do it — they monitor activities for two months and then start busting them down,” she said.

A couple hundred people used to hang out on the southeast corner of 12th and Jackson to smoke fentanyl, but there was no one loitering outside The Seattle Herbs & Grocery store on Thursday afternoon. Handwritten signs, asking people not to stand or smoke in front of the doors, were still on display in the windows facing Jackson.

“I feel pretty good right now. I don’t know how long they can keep it like that,” store employee Reggie Lu said of police, who still have a mobile precinct, a dark blue van with police markings, parked at the shopping plaza across the street and are regularly seen patrolling the neighborhood in police SUVs.

Another mobile precinct was still parked on Third Avenue across from International Cigar and Tobacco, the smoke shop Amir Yousuf has owned for 25 years. He said people have started using the bus stop outside his doors again, instead of walking to a stop two blocks to the north, and the McDonald’s restaurant on the corner reopened this week after temporarily closing following the [fatal shooting of 15-year-old Michael Del Bianco](#) on March 2.

A water fountain on the west side of Third — near the spot where Del Bianco collapsed after being shot — had been turned into a sidewalk memorial, draped with balloons and encircled with candles and flowers. Family photos affixed to white poster paper hung on the facade outside Prestige Copy & Print. “Rest in peace, Mikey. I love you,” was written on one of them.

“Did somebody get shot?” a delivery man, carting in cases of beverages, asked one of Yousuf’s employees.

“Where have you been?” she answered with a laugh.

Yousuf said he’s grateful for the increased police presence and said while the drug activity outside his business has quieted down, “a lot of those activities start after dark.”

“So, it’s changed. For how long?” he asked.

Huserik, the police spokesman, said uniformed officers deployed to the two locations are working in ever-expanding circles around those core areas, checking for places people may be gathering and taking

enforcement action when they come across illegal activity. Police leaders, he said, are constantly assessing what's working well and what isn't along with staffing levels, given the number of available officers fluctuates as people go on leave or return to work.

So far, police are not seeing "the major clusters or that kind of big hub of activity we'd seen at both locations," Huserik said.

Around the corner from Yousuf's smoke shop, Culpepper left open the trunk and driver's door of his SUV as he set up art supplies at his sidewalk stall — something that would have been unthinkable a week or two ago due to concerns about theft.

But Culpepper, who was commissioned to paint the mural that now adorns a wall between the McDonald's and the entrance to Westlake Station, wasn't worried. He said he's witnessed officers swoop in to stop drug users from smoking up in the alcove, where an elevator leads down into the station.

"I've watched this city grow. I'm so proud of what SPD's been doing recently. It was a nightmare down here, with the tinfoil and the violence," he said, a reference to drug users who heat fentanyl pills on bits of foil and suck in the smoke through straws. "It got to be too much, even for me, and I've been coming downtown since I was 7. I haven't smelled aluminum foil for two days now."

But for KV Bui, the owner of the noodle shop in Little Saigon International District, the police enforcement is too little too late. Her restaurant has been broken into four times in the past year and she said insurance providers will no longer cover the business. Before the police crackdown, she regularly chased off drug users who would pop into the restaurant, offering to sell her everything from steaks to toilet paper.

By the end of the year, Bui and her husband plan to relocate their restaurant to Southcenter, where there's better parking and fewer safety concerns.

"I'm Vietnamese and I want to stay in the community. It used to be really family oriented," she said of 12th and Jackson. "It's sad to see it going down like this. It's not safe, no one wants to be here."

Bui said police have assured her they have the resources to keep the pressure on to ensure those displaced by the recent operation don't come back.

"I'm still in the middle," she said. "I'm not sure what to believe. I hope it lasts."

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Revenge stabbing for killing Iranian general</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/nevada-police-allege-woman-stabbed-date-in-revenge-for-2020-killing-of-iranian-general">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/13/nevada-police-allege-woman-stabbed-date-in-revenge-for-2020-killing-of-iranian-general</a>
GIST	<p>A woman allegedly stabbed a man she had met on a dating website in retaliation for the 2020 death of an Iranian military leader killed in an American drone strike, police say.</p> <p>Nika Nikoubin, 21, has been charged with attempted murder, battery with a deadly weapon and burglary, <a href="#">KLAS-TV reported</a>.</p> <p>Nikoubin and the man met online on a dating website, Henderson police alleged in an arrest report. The pair then agreed to meet at Sunset Station hotel on 5 March, renting a room together.</p> <p>While in the room, the pair began having sex when Nikoubin put a blindfold on the man, according to the police report. Nikoubin then turned off the lights, and several minutes later, the man "felt a pain on the side of his neck", KLAS reported.</p>

	<p>Nikoubin allegedly stabbed the man in the neck “for revenge against US troops for the killing of Qassem Suleimani in 2020”, police wrote in a report.</p> <p><a href="#">US forces killed Suleimani</a>, a top general in Iran’s military, in a drone strike in January 2020. Suleimani headed the expeditionary Quds Force of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard. He gained prominence for advising Shia paramilitary forces fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq, before it was defeated in 2017.</p> <p>After the stabbing, the man pushed Nikoubin away and ran out of the room to call 911, police said.</p> <p>Nikoubin also ran out of the room, telling a hotel employee that she had just stabbed a man, police said.</p> <p>When talking to police, Nikoubin told an investigator “she wanted revenge,” police said. She said she had listened to a song called Grave Digger, which “gave her the motivation ... to carry out her revenge”.</p> <p>The man’s current condition was not available, the Las Vegas Review Journal reported.</p> <p>Nikoubin was scheduled to appear in court for a preliminary hearing 24 March, the newspaper said. It was not clear if she has a lawyer.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/12 Auto thefts spike across Washington</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/auto-theft-spikes-across-wa-state-task-force-recovers-11-stolen-cars-in-pierce-county">https://komonews.com/news/local/auto-theft-spikes-across-wa-state-task-force-recovers-11-stolen-cars-in-pierce-county</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>All across Washington State, the number of stolen cars has doubled, even tripled in some counties---year over year, according to Washington State Patrol.</p> <p>This week, Puget Sound Auto Theft Task Force recovered 11 stolen cars in Tacoma and the Parkland area as part of a multi-agency operation in Pierce County.</p> <p>Puget Sound Auto Theft Task Force says detectives along with officers from Tacoma Police Department and Washington State Patrol scoured areas like Hosmer Street in Tacoma.</p> <p>For five hours, they were out there looking at cars and running plates.</p> <p>They say car theft is up big time. New numbers just released this week show that in Pierce County the number of stolen cars has more than doubled when you look at January and February this year compared to last year.</p> <p>It’s a similar story in King County.</p> <p>KOMO News asked the auto theft task force why that is.</p> <p>“Cars are becoming increasingly easy to steal. The methods are being shared via criminal. Unfortunately, because of the status of jails being backed up, (people) are not being held accountable for their actions,” said a task force member. “These cars are out there all over the place being dumped. They’re being used for other crimes.”</p> <p>KOMO News checked in with Washington State Patrol and asked how bad the car theft problem is in other counties.</p> <p>Skagit, Whatcom, and Snohomish counties have all seen a spike in auto theft.</p> <p>For the month of January, compared to last year, in Skagit and Snohomish counties, the numbers have nearly doubled.</p>

	<p>In Whatcom County, the numbers more than quadrupled.</p> <p>The auto theft task force says what they recovered here in the Tacoma and Parkland area is "just the tip of the iceberg." They say they still have so many areas they wanted to get through and they hope to conduct the recovery operations more often.</p> <p>As for the recovered stolen vehicles, detectives contact the owners right away. In some cases, the cars are moved to a tow yard so that they are not stolen again.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Violent sports fans: alarm at every level</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://sports.yahoo.com/seems-more-extreme-violent-sports-120048629.html">https://sports.yahoo.com/seems-more-extreme-violent-sports-120048629.html</a>
GIST	<p>On Saturday, a <a href="#">violent brawl in the stands at a Mexican soccer game</a> left more than two dozen people injured and led to 14 arrests.</p> <p>On Sunday, <a href="#">an unidentified fan told an Iowa basketball player to kill himself</a> after he missed a free throw near the end of a loss to Illinois.</p> <p>On Monday, Los Angeles Lakers guard Russell Westbrook <a href="#">talked about not wanting to bring his kids to NBA games</a>, because of the terrible things they'll likely hear fans say about their dad.</p> <p>And on Tuesday, <a href="#">a fight between spectators delayed the Northeast Conference men's championship game</a> between Bryant and Wagner.</p> <p>"Athletic competition should bring out the best in us," the league's commissioner, Noreen Morris, <a href="#">said in a statement the next day</a>. "Sadly, we didn't see that last night."</p> <p>The four-day stretch prompts a question that has been simmering at all levels of sports for decades but come to the forefront over the past year, as fans have returned to arenas and stadiums after the worst of COVID-19.</p> <p>Are sports fans getting more aggressive, more abusive, more downright violent?</p> <p>To Karissa Niehoff, the chief executive officer of the National Federation of State High School Associations, it sure seems that way.</p> <p>"We've noticed, anecdotally, a rapid rise" in instances of aggressive or abusive behavior at high school sporting events, she said in a phone interview.</p> <p>"It seems to be more frequent, and it seems to be more extreme," she continued. "So it's not just somebody was swearing at the official. We're now having bench-clearing brawls at a greater number than we've seen. Physical assaults. ... We're just seeing, more commonly, a more extreme example of bad sportsmanship."</p> <p>There is little public data available on the rates of arrests or ejections at sports venues, according to Murray State professor of psychology Daniel Wann, who has been studying the issue for more than three decades. And even the most comprehensive datasets couldn't account for every vulgar taunt directed at an athlete, or stray object thrown.</p> <p>So it's difficult to say, empirically, whether instances of fan misbehavior have increased over a certain period of time, Wann said. But theoretically, it would make sense.</p> <p>"Civility is going down in our society. Empathy is going down in our society," Wann said. "Why would you expect anything different in the stands?"</p>



Wann described the bleachers at a sporting event as a unique tinderbox for aggression. There are two diametrically opposed groups of people, many with a deep emotional attachment to the performance of their team. Large crowds, which can lend themselves to mob mentalities or embolden individual fans to go rogue, with a belief that they'll never be caught or identified by security.

And then, in many cases, you've got alcohol.

"There's a strong connection between drinking and fan misbehavior," Harvard professor Henry Wechsler [said in 2003](#). "When you win, you're supposed to drink to celebrate, and when you lose, you're supposed to cry in your beer."

It was on Ten Cent Beer Night, after all, that fans stormed the field in one of the most infamous incidents of fan aggression at a baseball game in Cleveland in 1974 – which also illustrates that fan misbehavior is hardly a new phenomenon.

Nor is it limited to certain sports, or certain levels of competition.

After fans returned to sports venues en masse last year, the NBA saw [a string of abusive and aggressive incidents](#), from popcorn being dumped on Westbrook's head to a water bottle being thrown at Kyrie Irving. At a Tennessee football game, fans threw a variety of objects – [including a mustard bottle and a golf ball](#) – onto the field. And in the United Kingdom, the country's "football policing unit" [reported a 47% increase in arrests at soccer games this season](#) over the same period in 2019-20.

Meanwhile, at the high school level, Niehoff ticked off a number of recent incidents in [a newsletter distributed last month](#), from a referee being knocked unconscious at a tournament to a student shouting racist comments at an opposing player.

Even a youth basketball league in the small town of Rome, New York, had to cancel its season last month after a series of incidents involving parents in the stands.

"I think we have lost our way a little," Rome Parks and Recreation Department Deputy Director Ryan Hickey told league stakeholders in a message, according to the city's local newspaper, [The Rome Sentinel](#).

While the fan incidents in the pros tend to draw more national media scrutiny, Niehoff said outbursts at the amateur level are having severe consequences. She said the high school sports landscape has lost an estimated 50,000 officials and referees over the past three years – and that, when surveyed, their most common reason for leaving is parent and fan behavior.

"People are angry. And they're bringing that anger, for any number of reasons, into the high school gym," she said. "We cannot have it."

Wann wonders if maybe the rash of fan incidents since COVID-19 could stem, in some way, from the culture of abuse and aggression that exists online. He noted that many fans likely got accustomed to watching games at home, where they could lash out without repercussion or make hateful comments behind the anonymity of their keyboards.

"Most of the time, people are less likely to do those things in person than they are in private, because in private, they can get away with it," he said. "Maybe some of these fans kind of forgot that they're not in private anymore."

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HEADLINE	03/12 Study: 'excited delirium' meaningless term
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/12/us/excited-delirium-police-deaths-study/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/12/us/excited-delirium-police-deaths-study/index.html</a>

In videos that show George Floyd's killing in Minneapolis police custody, an officer holding down the Black man's ankles says, "I just worry about excited delirium or whatever." Another officer responds: "That's why we have the ambulance coming."

But Floyd did not meet any of the 10 criteria used by many to diagnose "excited delirium," a police surgeon testified later in the murder trial of the second officer, Derek Chauvin. And [an independent autopsy found](#) the 46-year-old died during the 2020 encounter of "asphyxiation from sustained pressure" when his neck and back were compressed.

That same year, [Elijah McClain was diagnosed](#) with "excited delirium" by paramedics in Aurora, Colorado. McClain was placed in a carotid hold by police and [injected with ketamine](#) when paramedics arrived. The medics never checked the 23-year-old Black man's vital signs, talked to him or touched him before making the diagnosis, [a Colorado grand jury found](#). McClain was declared brain dead three days later.

And "excited delirium" was among the causes of death [listed for Daniel Prude](#) in Rochester, New York, along with complications of asphyxia in a setting of physical restraint and acute PCP intoxication, according to a medical examiner's report. The 41-year-old Black man was having a mental health emergency in 2020 when officers covered his head with a mesh hood and held him prone on the ground before he stopped breathing. He was declared brain dead and died a week later.

Excited delirium is used as a field diagnosis by first responders across the country. Officers in many police departments are officially taught to look for "superhuman strength" and "police non-compliance" as symptoms of a syndrome that could kill the subject of an emergency call or induce that person to kill them.

"Pain tolerance," "unusual strength," "agitation" and being "inappropriately clothed" are other potential features of the syndrome [listed in an American College of Emergency Physicians white paper](#) cited in expert testimony in Chauvin's trial, though the doctors' group told CNN it never officially endorsed the 2009 document.

Similar descriptions of excited delirium can be found in police training materials used in several major US cities. Officers are called upon to make split-second decisions to identify the condition in order to preserve their own safety and the safety of their subject, including potentially by using force. Such a determination also later can be key to how the public, their supervisors or the courts view the incident.

Authorities claimed these Black men had excited delirium just before they died. But the diagnosis itself is a problem and should be abandoned, a new study says. But [a new study from](#) doctors at Harvard, the University of Michigan and Massachusetts General Hospital, as well as civil rights lawyers, says the term excited delirium is "scientifically meaningless" and has become a "catch-all for deaths occurring in the context of law enforcement restraint, often coinciding with substance use or mental illness, and disproportionately used to explain the deaths of young Black men in police encounters."

Indeed, a case that helped cement the term's widespread use unfairly targeted Black people. And while there is no national database of excited delirium deaths in police custody, [one study of 166 cases](#) found that Black people made up 43% of those deaths from 2010 to 2020 nationally. Black or African Americans made up 13% of the population in the most recent US Census.

In rejecting the term outright, the coalition of physicians, civil rights attorneys and researchers who worked on the Physicians for Human Rights study wants it stricken from the official vocabulary used by emergency medicine technicians, doctors, law enforcement and medical examiners.

It should be replaced, they say, with an approach that prioritizes immediate treatment of the underlying causes of the behavior encountered by first responders. A better approach might also mean expanding the type of professional who responds to emergency calls to include those with specialized training in mental health and social work.

**Medical groups don't recognize police term**

The problem with “excited delirium” goes deeper than the phrase itself, said Dr. Michele Heisler, medical director of Physicians for Human Rights, a co-author of the study and a professor of public health and internal medicine at the University of Michigan.

“We were concerned about the concept,” she explained, pointing to the myriad of symptoms often listed under the term’s umbrella.

“People can become agitated or delirious due to multiple factors, ranging from alcohol withdrawal, drug overdose, psychosis. ... What we’re arguing is that these underlying causes require medical attention, rather than forcible restraint by police.”

Officers learn in academy training to restrain and control a subject until medics – who are supposed to make any medical diagnosis – get to the scene.

“Training typically involves recognizing signs of ED (excited delirium) and summoning emergency medical services immediately in such cases,” Sherri Martin, national director of wellness services for the Fraternal Order of Police told CNN.

Police also sometimes lean heavily on paramedics to use powerful tranquilizer drugs so subjects experiencing what they say is excited delirium stop resisting. Later on, coroners and medical examiners may use the same language, including as part of autopsies.

An umbrella term like excited delirium can also help facilitate the training process, Sergeant Tony Lockhart, crisis intervention trainer for King’s County, Washington, said. “You call it whatever you want; I see these *behaviors*.” Aggregating them into one idea, he said, is “helpful in some areas, to at least give us a different title to think about in our head.”

Even so, the term is not listed in the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases nor the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, tools seen as the standard for medical diagnosis across the world. The American Medical Association does not support it as a diagnosis, and the American Psychiatric Association, which does not recognize it as a mental disorder, [referred to it in 2020](#) as “too non-specific” and its criteria unclear, adding that no rigorous studies had been done to validate it.

The term’s roots also raise questions. Excited delirium was first used in the 1980s, when a deputy chief medical examiner in Florida publicized a theory that Black women could die from “combining sex with cocaine use,” the Physicians for Human Rights study details.

“For some reason, the male of the species becomes psychotic and the female of the species dies in relation to sex,” Dr. Charles Wetli of Miami-Dade County told the Miami Herald at the time, adding that it might be the genetic makeup of Black people that predisposes them to dying.

The modern incarnation of the term, the report says, was popularized by the 2005 mass-purchase and distribution of one book to police departments by [the makers of TASER guns](#), Axon Network. The company distributed those copies to bring awareness to excited delirium, it told CNN in a statement.

### **What delirium looks like**

“Superhuman strength,” one of the criteria to identify excited delirium listed in the 2009 ACEP report, is completely unfounded, Heisler said. Instead, “if you’re frightened, it’s going to be an intense adrenergic response,” she said. “You’re going to have a strong fight-or-flight response. (But) it’s not a response that in and of itself is going to cause death.”

Adrenaline-related responses are responsible for an increase in heart rate, constriction of blood vessels and dilation of pupils, she said. But it’s unfounded “that you can just suddenly scare yourself to death – which in a way seems to be the implied physiological mechanism of excited delirium. But it certainly is the case that it’s very frightening,” Heisler said.

In their report, the Physicians for Human Rights authors used the American Psychiatric Association's definition of *delirium*: "a neurocognitive disorder characterized by a 'disturbance in attention and awareness that develops over a short period of time and is not better explained by another preexisting, evolving, or established disorder.'"

In layman's terms: "Delirium is a symptom of an underlying cause and not an independent diagnosis," Heisler said.

A person with delirium may show "fear, agitation, or euphoria, as well as reduced awareness of the environment," and delirium itself is usually a sign of an underlying problem, such as organ failure, infection, lack of oxygen, low blood sugar levels, drug side effects, intoxication or withdrawal, according to the Physicians for Human Rights report.

In any case, "delirium ... wouldn't be defined just by the need for use of force," said Dr. Debra Pinals, director of the American Psychiatric Association's Council on Psychiatry and Law.

The report also raises concern over the use of the term in medical examiners' and coroners' reports as a cause of death. "Delirium is not itself considered a cause of sudden death," it reads.

"You can't say that someone dies from any form of delirium," Heisler said. "It's like saying, what is the cause of death? Chest pain. What is the cause of death? I don't know, shortness of breath. In a way, it's as nonsensical."

The National Association of Medical Examiners has never issued "any type of consensus on excited delirium and as an organization have not formally 'recognized the condition as a diagnosis,'" it told CNN in a statement. Its president, Dr. Kathryn Pinneri, said, "I suspect it is accepted among many NAME members."

### **Officers often feel caught in the middle**

In the field and in medical settings, the treatment for delirium is to address the underlying cause with medical care such as hydration, medication, and pain control, Heisler said. Restraints are actively discouraged, according to the Physicians for Human Rights report, and "never include prone or neck restraints, and are monitored by an independent medical oversight organization."

But Lockhart said in his trainings, he teaches officers to restrain subjects in "altered states" – for their own safety and for the safety of others involved – as swiftly as possible. "The longer it goes on, definitely more danger to the subject, definitely more danger to every officer involved and for that matter, any other folks around," he said.

Lockhart's view is that there should be as many officers around the subject as possible. "In an ideal world ... one officer grabs one leg, and another grabs one leg, another grabs an arm and other grabs an arm, obviously giving commands and try to do that quickly as we can to get them detained to get that medical person access to that individual."

But in reality, restraining a person in distress can be much more challenging, especially when only one or two officers are on the scene, he said.

The exhaustive training police officers go through as cadets on excited delirium – and continue to attend as mandatory refreshers throughout their careers – has shown, even in court, to be part of the problem.

"The fact is, that term has been increasingly co-opted by nonmedical professionals and being used in nonclinical discussions or nonclinical realms," said Dr. Jeffrey Goodloe, member of the American College of Emergency Physicians board of directors and chief medical officer for the EMS system for Metropolitan Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

“There’s quite a spectrum of educational programming, even within the house of medicine between different specialties. And then obviously, that just becomes even more exponentially magnified, if you will, if you look at the various and sundry training programs within EMS agencies, ambulance services, fire departments, law enforcement agencies, and so there’s not one national standard educational curriculum in this.”

It’s clear more training and dialogue between the law enforcement and the medical communities is needed, Goodloe said.

In Lockhart’s 40-hour classes on excited delirium, he said he specifically tells officers, “You are not here to learn how to diagnose. You’re looking at these behaviors so that you may alter your techniques to get a good solution so everybody’s safe.”

But a disconnect between first responder training – based on the handful of studies that validate excited delirium – and most academic medical literature has first responders acting out of step with the medical community.

“Police officers often feel like they’re caught in the middle,” said Martin, of the Fraternal Order of Police. “They’re not thinking about all of these other voices. They show up to work every day to answer the calls, to do their job, and they want to have the tools and the knowledge to do the best job that they can.”

Departments are also concerned with liability, she said, and they have an incentive to ensure officers are acting in accordance with regulations. “They don’t want their department, their officer, their community to suffer the death of someone who was or may be suffering with excited delirium.”

#### **‘Term can produce a visceral and negative response’**

But changes in how police learn to respond to medical emergencies and mental health crises might not come easy. In Minneapolis, despite a 2021 directive from the city to halt excited delirium training, officers were still being trained on the concept months later, the [Star Tribune reported in February](#). A digital slide from a training program shows the words “excited delirium” stricken through and below them, “severe agitation with delirium,” is suggested as a better term, a video obtained by the newspaper shows.

During Chauvin’s trial in April, Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo testified the then-officer’s actions and [use of force during Floyd’s arrest](#) were [contrary to department policy](#).

“There is an initial reasonableness in trying to just get him under control in the first few seconds,” Arradondo said. “But once there was no longer any resistance and clearly when Mr. Floyd was no longer responsive and even motionless, to continue to apply that level of force to a person prone out, handcuffed behind their back – that in no way shape or form is anything that is by policy. It is not part of our training, and it is certainly not part of our ethics or our values.”

After an outcry over the term excited delirium in 2020, even the American College of Emergency Physicians – whose definition remains the industry standard – has tried to [shift its language in new studies](#) to “hyperactive delirium.”

“We recognize the term ‘excited delirium’ is increasingly being used in non-clinical medicine discussions and the term can produce a visceral and negative response, particularly among those in communities with complicated relationships with law enforcement or medicine,” a spokesperson for the group told CNN in statement. “In clinical discussions, patient care, and especially safety of patients during care, must remain the focus.”

Officers instead could be taught about an array of medical emergencies that may look like what’s long been known as excited delirium but that may warrant different medical responses, “including heart attacks, drug or substance overdoses or withdrawals, acute psychosis, and oxygen deprivation,” the Physicians for Human Rights report states.

“I think we’re asking too much of police officers, and I think many of them are responding as best they can,” Heisler said. “They’re being told that you can put your knee on someone’s back and that’s safe. ... Are we expecting police officers to be trained in all these medical diagnoses? I mean, are we expecting doctors?”

### **Getting mental health experts to emergency calls**

The Physicians for Human Rights report’s main recommendation is to nix the use of the term “excited delirium” altogether – erasing it from training manuals and autopsy reports – and encouraging medical associations that haven’t done so to issue statements discouraging its use among their members.

Official responses to people experiencing mental and behavioral health challenges must improve, authors say in the report. That might start with rethinking who first responders should be, Heisler said.

“We need to think about – are there other models? Could we bring in social workers, psychologists, trained behavioral health people, instead of having a group of armed, uniformed police that (are met) with a strong fight-or-flight response?” she said.

Lockhart, the crisis intervention trainer, agrees with this recommendation and sees major advantages in having team of “co-responders” that include police and mental health specialists.

“Just inherently, by that officer being there and listening to the mental health person deal with a subject, that officer is getting better because they’re seeing things that work, new ideas, a different way of approaching something,” he said, adding that an officer’s presence helps ensure the safety of the mental health professional.

In the end, he said, the main benefit is that “the subject we’re dealing with is getting better help and hopefully sooner” than they would otherwise.

On an institutional level, the Physicians for Human Rights study recommends establishing “independent oversight systems and mandat(ing) independent investigations of deaths in law enforcement custody,” involving excited delirium in state and local governments, and it calls on Congress to do the same.

A report commissioned by Congress could answer many questions the study has identified, said Joanna Naples-Mitchell, human rights lawyer and researcher at Physicians for Human Rights.

“For example, where has excited delirium come up, and trying to understand why it is they are finding what seems to have been the case so far, that it’s majority Black men and other people of color this term is being attributed to?” Naples-Mitchell said.

“And is it exclusively in the context of law enforcement where this term is coming up? Is it exclusively in the context of restraints being used that this comes up and deaths are attributed to excited delirium? There’s a lot that legislators can do to really leverage their powers as investigators to look at this and bring public attention to it more broadly.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Saudi Arabia executes 81 men in 24hrs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/saudi-arabia-executes-men-in-one-day">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/saudi-arabia-executes-men-in-one-day</a>
GIST	<p>Saudi Arabia has executed 81 men over the past 24 hours, including seven Yemenis and one Syrian national, on charges including terrorism and holding “deviant beliefs”, state news agency SPA said on Saturday.</p> <p>The number dwarfed the 67 executions reported in the kingdom in all of 2021 and the 27 in 2020.</p> <p>“These individuals ... were convicted of various crimes including murdering innocent men, women and children,” SPA said, citing a statement from the interior ministry.</p>



	<p>“Crimes committed by these individuals also include pledging allegiance to foreign terrorist organisations, such as Isis (Islamic State), al-Qaeda and the Houthis,” it added.</p> <p>Some travelled to conflict zones to join “terrorist organisations”, SPA said.</p> <p>The men included 37 Saudi nationals who were found guilty in a single case for attempting to assassinate security officers and targeting police stations and convoys, the report added.</p> <p>Saudi Arabia’s human rights records have been under an increasing scrutiny from rights groups and western allies since the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.</p> <p>It has faced strong criticism of its restrictive laws on political and religious expression, and the implementation of the death penalty, including for defendants arrested when they were minors.</p> <p>Saudi Arabia denies accusations of human rights abuses and says it protects its national security according to its laws.</p> <p>SPA said the accused were provided with the right to an attorney and were guaranteed their full rights under Saudi law during the judicial process.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/12 Sex traffickers target Ukraine refugees</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/12/concern-grows-over-traffickers-targeting-ukrainian/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/12/concern-grows-over-traffickers-targeting-ukrainian/</a>
GIST	<p>SIRET, Romania (AP) — One man was detained in Poland suspected of raping a 19-year-old refugee he’d lured with offers of shelter after she fled war-torn Ukraine. Another was overheard promising work and a room to a 16-year-old girl before authorities intervened.</p> <p>Another case inside a refugee camp at Poland’s Medyka border, raised suspicions when a man was offering help only to women and children. When questioned by police, he changed his story.</p> <p>As millions of women and children flee across Ukraine’s borders in the face of Russian aggression, concerns are growing over how to protect the most vulnerable refugees from being targeted by human traffickers or becoming victims of other forms of exploitation.</p> <p>“Obviously all the refugees are women and children,” said Joung-ah Ghedini-Williams, the UNHCR’s head of global communications, who has visited borders in Romania, Poland and Moldova.</p> <p>“You have to worry about any potential risks for trafficking - but also exploitation, and sexual exploitation and abuse. These are the kinds of situations that people like traffickers ... look to take advantage of,” she said.</p> <p>The U.N. refugee agency says more than 2.5 million people, including more than a million children, have already fled war-torn Ukraine in what has become an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Europe and its fastest exodus since World War II.</p> <p>In countries throughout Europe, including the border nations of Romania, Poland, Hungary, Moldova and Slovakia, private citizens and volunteers have been greeting and offering help to those whose lives have been shattered by war. From free shelter to free transport to work opportunities and other forms of assistance - help isn’t far away.</p> <p>But neither are the risks.</p>

Police in Wrocław, Poland, said Thursday they detained a 49-year-old suspect on rape charges after he allegedly assaulted a 19-year-old Ukrainian refugee he lured with offers of help over the internet. The suspect could face up to 12 years in prison for the “brutal crime,” authorities said.

“He met the girl by offering his help via an internet portal,” police said in a statement. “She escaped from war-torn Ukraine, did not speak Polish. She trusted a man who promised to help and shelter her. Unfortunately, all this turned out to be deceitful manipulation.”

Police in Berlin warned women and children in a post on social media in Ukrainian and Russian against accepting offers of overnight stays, and urged them to report anything suspicious.

Tamara Barnett, director of operations at the Human Trafficking Foundation, a U.K.-based charity which grew out of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Human Trafficking, said that such a rapid, mass displacement of people could be a “recipe for disaster.”

“When you’ve suddenly got a huge cohort of really vulnerable people who need money and assistance immediately,” she said, “it’s sort of a breeding ground for exploitative situations and sexual exploitation. When I saw all these volunteers offering their houses ... that flagged a worry in my head.”

The Migration Data Portal notes that humanitarian crises such as those associated with conflicts “can exacerbate pre-existing trafficking trends and give rise to new ones” and that traffickers can thrive on “the inability of families and communities to protect themselves and their children.”

Security officials in Romania and Poland told The Associated Press that plain-clothed intelligence officers were on the lookout for criminal elements. In the Romanian border town of Siret, authorities said men offering free rides to women have been sent away.

Human trafficking is a grave human rights violation and can involve a wide range of exploitative roles. From sexual exploitation — such as prostitution — to forced labor, from domestic slavery to organ removal, and forced criminality, it is often inflicted by traffickers through coercion and abuse of power.

A 2020 human trafficking report by the European Commission, the EU’s executive branch, estimates the annual global profit from the crime is 29.4 billion euros (\$32 billion). It says that sexual exploitation is the most common form of human trafficking in the 27-nation bloc and that nearly three-quarters of all victims are female, with almost every fourth victim a child.

Madalina Mocan, committee director at ProTECT, an organization that brings together 21 anti-trafficking groups, said there are “already worrying signs,” with some refugees being offered shelter in exchange for services such as cleaning and babysitting, which could lead to exploitation.

“There will be attempts of traffickers trying to take victims from Ukraine across the border. Women and children are vulnerable, especially those that do not have connections - family, friends, other networks of support,” she said, adding that continued conflict will mean “more and more vulnerable people” reaching the borders.

At the train station in the Hungarian border town of Zahony, 25-year-old Dayrina Kneziva arrived from Kyiv with her childhood friend. Fleeing a war zone, Kneziva said, left them little time to consider other potential dangers.

“When you compare ... you just choose what will be less dangerous,” said Kneziva, who hopes to make it to Slovakia’s capital of Bratislava with her friend. “When you leave in a hurry, you just don’t think about other things.”

A large proportion of the refugees arriving in the border countries want to move on to friends or family elsewhere in Europe and many are relying on strangers to reach their destinations.

“The people who are leaving Ukraine are under emotional stress, trauma, fear, confusion,” said Cristina Minculescu, a psychologist at Next Steps Romania who provides support to trafficking victims. “It’s not just human trafficking, there is a risk of abduction, rape ... their vulnerabilities being exploited in different forms.”

At Romania’s Siret border after a five-day car journey from the bombed historical city of Chernihiv, 44-year-old Iryna Pypypenko waited inside a tent with her two children, sheltering from the cold. She said a friend in Berlin who is looking for accommodation for her has warned her to beware of possibly nefarious offers.

“She told me there are many, very dangerous propositions,” said Pypypenko, whose husband and parents stayed behind in Ukraine. “She told me that I have to communicate only with official people and believe only the information they give me.”

Ionut Epureanu, the chief police commissioner of Suceava county, told the AP at the Siret border that police are working closely with the country’s national agency against human trafficking and other law enforcement to try to prevent crimes.

“We are trying to make a control for every vehicle leaving the area,” he said. “A hundred people making transport have good intentions, but it’s enough to be one that isn’t ... and tragedy can come.”

Vlad Gheorghe, a Romanian member of the European Parliament who launched a Facebook group called United for Ukraine that has more than 250,000 members and pools resources to help refugees, including accommodation, says he is working closely with the authorities to prevent any abuses.

“No offer for volunteering or stay or anything goes unchecked, we check every offer,” he said. “We call back, we ask some questions, we have a minimal check before any offer for help is accepted.”

At Poland’s Medyka border, seven former members of the French Foreign Legion, an elite military force, are voluntarily providing their own security to refugees and are on the lookout for traffickers.

“This morning we found three men who were trying to get a bunch of women into a van,” said one of the former legionnaires, a South African who gave only his first name, Mornay. “I can’t 100% say they were trying to recruit them for sex trafficking, but when we started talking to them and approached them — they got nervous and just left immediately.”

“We just want to try and get women and kids to safety,” he added. “The risk is very high because there are so many people you just don’t know who is doing what.”

Back at her tent on the Siret border, Pypypenko said people were offering help — but she wasn’t sure who she could trust.

“People just enter and tell us that they can take us for free to France,” she said. “Today we are for three hours here ... and we had two or three propositions like that. I couldn’t even imagine such a situation, that such a big tragedy could be the field of crime.”

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HEADLINE	03/11 Court: man’s wrongful imprisonment 45yrs
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/us/isaiah-andrews-released-ohio.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/11/us/isaiah-andrews-released-ohio.html</a>
GIST	<p>For decades, Isaiah Andrews has maintained his innocence in the 1974 murder of his wife, unaware that the key to his exoneration was buried in the archives of the Cleveland Division of Police.</p> <p>The Cleveland police’s decision to withhold crucial information in the case resurfaced on Thursday, when an Ohio court determined that Mr. Andrews, now 84, had been wrongfully imprisoned for 45 years.</p>

Mr. Andrews, who is sick and uses a wheelchair, has been free since May 2020. He was later found not guilty at a second jury trial in October, but the court had to declare him wrongfully imprisoned so he could seek damages from the State of Ohio.

"I've won the battle for this," Mr. Andrews told reporters after the court hearing on Thursday.

Mr. Andrews and his wife, Regina Andrews, were newly married when he reported her missing from the Cleveland hotel room that they had been living in while they looked for a permanent home, according to court documents.

On Sep. 18, 1974, Mr. Andrews told detectives that he last saw her just before 8 a.m. that day and that he had been running errands into the evening, according to court documents.

Ms. Andrews's body was found that afternoon in Forest Hill Park by a worker on his lunch break. She had been stabbed multiple times and wrapped in bedroom linen.

At the time of the murder, detectives wrote that they thought the crime was committed by Willie H. Watts, who was trying to sell his mother's valuables to get away from the city, according to court documents. He was arrested, but his name was not mentioned in the trial and there was no indication that he was mentioned in the case discovery, according to the court papers.

Detectives produced no physical evidence linking Mr. Andrews to his wife's murder, and the police found no blood in his car or hotel room, but he was convicted and sentenced to life in prison in 1975. He had previously served 15 years in prison for the murder of his staff sergeant in the Marines, according to the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office.

Investigators released Mr. Watts after he provided an alibi for the time of death initially estimated by the coroner, court papers said. The estimate was revised after an autopsy.

Later, Mr. Watts was charged on four separate occasions with kidnapping and was imprisoned for more than 20 years for aggravated arson. Two of the kidnapping cases were later dismissed. Mr. Watts died in 2011, Cleveland.com reported.

The Ohio Innocence Project, which aims to get wrongfully convicted people out of prison, did not know about Mr. Watts when it decided to review Mr. Andrews's case in 2015.

"You would have never known from reading the trial transcripts that the police had arrested someone else for this," said Brian Howe, a staff attorney for the project.

That information became available only in 2019, after Mr. Andrews's lawyers requested that the DNA in the case be tested. The Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation requested files from the original medical examination and was given police files which brought to light the other man's arrest.

A judge for the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court reversed Mr. Andrews's conviction in 2020 and ordered a new trial.

Mr. Andrews's lawyers said that the retrial was unnecessary and that they were surprised the Cuyahoga County prosecutors decided to pursue it instead of declining to prosecute.

The prosecutor's office said in an emailed statement that it had weighed Mr. Andrews's previous murder conviction in its decision to pursue a retrial. "When this conviction was overturned, we had an obligation to pursue justice on behalf of the victim and her family," the statement said.

At the second trial in October, the proceedings mostly involved reading aloud transcripts from the initial trial in March 1975. The jury found him not guilty.

Mr. Andrews's wrongful imprisonment is considered the third longest known in the United States, according to the [National Registry of Exonerations](#).

The wrongful imprisonment declaration on Thursday allows Mr. Andrews to continue with a lawsuit that seeks damages from the state.

Mr. Andrews also filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the City of Cleveland in February, accusing the police there of failing to provide information about the other suspect.

Sarah Gelsomino, a lawyer with Friedman, Gilbert and Gerhardstein who is representing Mr. Andrews, said that under state law, he was entitled to \$56,752.36 for each year that he was imprisoned, or more than \$2.5 million. The lawyers will also seek money for lost wages, legal fees and the costs of proving his innocence.

The money cannot make up for the years Mr. Andrews spent in prison, however.

"He lost everybody when he was in prison," Ms. Gelsomino said. "So, he didn't have a family waiting to welcome him back."

Instead, Mr. Andrews has been supported by a community of other people who have been exonerated in Ohio or who are still seeking exoneration. The Ohio Innocence Project has freed 34 individuals, including 14 cases that originated in Cuyahoga County, since it was founded in 2003.

Three members of that community sat behind Mr. Andrews in court on Thursday: Lamont Clark, [Ruel Sailor](#) and Charles Jackson, who was [exonerated in November 2018](#) after 27 years in prison and who lives with Mr. Andrews and helps care for him.

The men told reporters after the hearing on Thursday that it was a day for them all to celebrate.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Jewish leaders: rise in antisemitic incidents</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/jewish-leaders-warn-rise-antisemitic-incidents/YMXKTFKPOBEYPOAB64OPEH5AJ4/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/jewish-leaders-warn-rise-antisemitic-incidents/YMXKTFKPOBEYPOAB64OPEH5AJ4/</a>
GIST	<p>Seattle-area Jewish leaders are warning about a rise in antisemitic incidents.</p> <p>They say people are becoming emboldened to act on hate, and they are particularly concerned about cases in schools.</p> <p>One example is what Samantha Tarlowe experienced last December.</p> <p>As Hanukkah approached, she organized the first meeting of the Jewish Student Union at Skyline High School.</p> <p>"I wanted there to be a safe place for all of us to come together and meet and just bring awareness to Jewish culture," Tarlowe said.</p> <p>After she promoted the event on Instagram, another student received a direct message that read, "Perfect, now I know where I can continue Hitler's legacy."</p> <p>"It felt like a threat," Tarlowe said.</p> <p>Issaquah School District officials said they swiftly investigated and the student who sent the message faced consequences.</p> <p>Tarlowe and her parents are more concerned that some students thought the message was funny.</p>

“You don’t joke about when six million innocent Jews were murdered,” said her father, Michael Tarlowe.

“I think a big part of it is a lack of education about the Holocaust. I don’t think they fully understood the seriousness of the issue,” Samantha Tarlowe said.

Miri Cypers, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, said antisemitic incidents in schools and on social media are becoming more common, like a photographed off-campus Nazi salute by Mercer Island High School students in 2019.

“What we’re seeing is old hatreds being refashioned and reimagined to really meet the world we’re in,” Cypers said.

The ADL maintains a heat map of hateful incidents, with 630 reported in Washington in 2020 and 2021.

“I think what we’re seeing right now is a normalization of hatred and bigotry and bias,” Cypers said.

In January, after a gunman took hostages in a Texas synagogue, Rabbi Will Berkovitz wrote an opinion piece in The Seattle Times calling attention to a rise in hatred against Jews.

“They seem to be attacking Jews for being Jews,” Berkovitz said.

In his article, Berkovitz wrote, “It is far too easy for critique of the Israeli government to be used as fodder for assaulting and intimidating Jews and defacing Jewish spaces.”

Days later, someone spray-painted a message that read, “It’s okay to be a Zionist genocider” near Jewish Family Service, the social service agency Berkovitz runs.

“If that happened for many other communities, you would see vigils, protests, people up in arms, and they should be,” Berkovitz said.

Too often, he said, people don’t recognize the economic and racial diversity of the Jewish community.

“We’re white as long as dominant society wants us to be white. And history has shown us for thousands of years that only goes so far, and then the Jews are no longer part of the community, the Jews are no longer part of the culture, they’re othered and victimized and scapegoated,” Berkovitz said.

After Samantha Tarlowe saw that hateful message from another student, the first meeting of the Jewish Student Union went on anyway.

The Tarlowe family is now advocating for more education, both about the Holocaust and how to combat new forms of hate.

The Issaquah School District told KIRO 7 high school students are taught about the Holocaust in history classes.

Before the pandemic, the district partnered with the Holocaust Center for Humanity to arrange speakers at some schools.

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HEADLINE	03/11 FAA: 14 laser strikes at SEA planes in Mar.
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/laser-strikes-airplanes-seattle-tacoma-international-airport-seatac/281-e0acdb44-84c2-4d1e-a834-c920d06f41a1">https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/laser-strikes-airplanes-seattle-tacoma-international-airport-seatac/281-e0acdb44-84c2-4d1e-a834-c920d06f41a1</a>



GIST	<p>SEATTLE — There have been 14 laser strikes reported to have hit planes at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in March. There have been 30 incidents since mid-February, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).</p> <p>Laser strikes involve a person intentionally pointing a laser at an aircraft, potentially causing pilots to experience flash blindness or obscured vision, endangering the lives of those on the flight.</p> <p>Shining a laser at an aircraft is a federal crime, punishable by fines up to \$11,000 per violation and up to \$30,800 for multiple incidents.</p> <p>Between Feb. 17 and March 10, there have been 30 reported laser strikes hitting planes taking off or arriving at Sea-Tac Airport.</p> <p>During that time period, there were eight different days where laser strikes were reported multiple times, on Feb. 19, Feb. 22, Feb. 24, Feb. 28, March 1, March 4, March 6 and March 7.</p> <p>On Feb. 22, four flights reported getting hit by laser strikes while south of the airport, although the strikes occurred as far as 26 miles apart over the course of the night. On Feb. 24, Feb. 28 and March 7 multiple flights reported getting hit by airstrikes in approximately the same location.</p> <p>On most occasions where multiple laser strikes hit flights on the same night, the airplanes were flying in the same direction headed toward, or away from the airport, according to FAA data.</p> <p>Laser strikes have been on the rise nationally, with an all-time high of 9,723 laser strikes reported by the FAA in 2021. So far in 2022, there have been 1,496 laser strike incidents reported across the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/11 Amazon relocates workers due to crime</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/amazon-temporarily-relocating-workers-from-office-at-3rd-and-pine-due-to-crime-concerns">https://komonews.com/news/local/amazon-temporarily-relocating-workers-from-office-at-3rd-and-pine-due-to-crime-concerns</a>
GIST	<p>Citing an increase in violent crime, Amazon announced Friday it would temporarily relocate its workers from the company's office space at 3rd and Pine.</p> <p>According to Amazon, roughly 1,800 employees are assigned to 300 Pine building but note many are still working remotely. KOMO News was sent the following the statement regarding the move.</p> <p>"Given recent incidents near 3rd and Pine, we're providing employees currently at that location with alternative office space elsewhere," an Amazon spokesman said in an emailed statement. "We are hopeful that conditions will improve and that we will be able to bring employees back to this location when it is safe to do so."</p> <p>In the last few weeks, shootings, including one that killed a 15-year-old boy, have rocked the busy stretch of downtown. Seattle Police has set up a mobile precinct along 3rd Avenue with officers on bikes patrolling the area, too.</p> <p>KOMO News reached out to Mayor Bruce Harrell's office for reaction to the Seattle-based company's decision and was sent the following statement.</p> <p>"Mayor Harrell is working every day to make downtown a safe and thriving neighborhood for residents, workers, and businesses. While it will take time to reverse longstanding safety issues, Mayor Harrell's early efforts are critical first steps to address crime and improve safety through dedicated SPD officers, a mobile SPD precinct, and additional environmental changes. Mayor Harrell will continue to develop a comprehensive approach to public safety in collaboration with police and safety advocates, community members, service providers, and businesses, including Amazon, to activate, revitalize, and restore downtown for all."</p>

HEADLINE	03/11 Man gets 5yrs: hitting Seattle cop with bat
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/man-sentenced-to-prison-for-hitting-seattle-officer-in-head-with-baseball-bat">https://komonews.com/news/local/man-sentenced-to-prison-for-hitting-seattle-officer-in-head-with-baseball-bat</a>
GIST	<p>Prosecutors said a man arrested for fires set during 2020 riots at Capitol Hill was sentenced to several years in prison for attacking a Seattle police officer with a baseball bat.</p> <p>Jacob Greenburg, then 19 when was he arrested, will serve five years in prison for striking Seattle police officer Jose Jimenez during the riots. Greenburg was sentenced on charges for attempted arson in the first degree, assault in the second degree with a deadly weapon and a reckless burning in the second degree.</p> <p>Jimenez said his memory is still foggy after the attack.</p> <p>“The probability of somebody surviving an attack like that to the back of the head – I don’t know how I’m still here,” Jimenez said. “It’s either with the good equipment that was provided by the City of Seattle and the Police Department or all the prayers from my relatives and individuals out there still supporting us.”</p> <p>The Seattle officer said he believes he would have been killed by Greenburg if he had a gun in his possession. He was attacked multiple times during the riots before the baseball bat attack, he said.</p> <p>“If he had the opportunity to get his hands on a firearm that night, I wouldn’t be here,” Jimenez said. “My wife would be a widow. My children would more than likely be raised by another man.”</p>
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